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Monday 16 May 2016

Lundi 16 mai 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 mai 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome Sam Morra, chief officer at Condrain Group. He's also president of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. It's their lobby day at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would ask the members to help me welcome some special guests. They're musicians who are here straight from the beautiful island of St. Martin. The name of the band is 4DH Entertainment. They play hip hop and soca. We have with us Luciano Richards, Glenville Patrick, Daniel Christian, and their manager, Keith Sweeney, who is my constituent from the great riding of York South–Weston here in Toronto.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure this morning to introduce, on their lobby day, Dan Corcoran, past president and Kingston representative, Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association; Mark Van Bree, Sarnia representative for the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association; Todd Arnott, secretary and Simcoe rep for the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, and of Arnott Construction; and Tony DiPede, director-at-large, Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association board of directors. We welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome my good friend and fellow New Democrat John O'Toole in the members' gallery here this morning.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague the member from Guelph, Liz Sandals, I would like to welcome to the House Justine Richardson, the mother of our page captain William Deaton, and his sister Anna Sophia Deaton, this morning. Welcome to the gallery.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce several members of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association who are joining us here today: Patrick McManus, Harry Bauman, Vince Bellissimo, Larry Taylor and Sam Dyson. Welcome, gentlemen, to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I know that you'll more formally introduce John O'Toole yourself, but I did

want to introduce, as well, joining John today, good friend Mike Patrick.

Thank you very much for joining us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very well done, member.

The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the Speaker's gallery today we're joined by one of the best high school teachers Oakville has ever seen: That's Beth Robertson. Her son Jeff and also Tim Robertson are with us today. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today's page captain is Emma Vandermeer. Joining her is her mother, Kelly Tomkins, and her sister Faith Vandermeer. They're in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Chris Steele and Angelina Palmisano. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to welcome my cousin Todd Arnott of Arnott Construction, who's here with the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As a proud dad, I'm very humbled and excited to introduce to the gallery this morning my daughter, Brooke Nicholls. She's in the members' gallery. Welcome, Brooke.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce my newest staff member, Cameron Wood, who has joined us today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Further introductions? Thank you.

I take my cue from the member from Renfrew. I appreciate his handling. In the members' west gallery is a former member, John O'Toole from Durham, in the 36th to the 40th Legislatures. Thank you and welcome to the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've witnessed many firsts; now we're heckling visitors.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Thirty renewable energy companies have contributed over \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party. Each one of those companies has received a government FIT contract for wind turbines or a contract for solar power. Speaker, does the Minister of Energy think it's

acceptable to take over \$1.3 million from companies that receive multi-million dollars' worth of contracts from his ministry? Does he believe that's acceptable?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member would know that the awarding of renewable contracts is the independent responsibility of the Independent Electricity System Operator. They make all the decisions. They also have a very, very strict regimen in terms of fairness and equity. They do have a fairness commissioner on each one of their contracts and they also do not let us know who the winners are. They might have 100 applications and they might award 10 or 12 contracts. We find out in the press release, just like everybody else in the public.

And, Mr. Speaker, that side—the opposition—holds \$10,000-a-seat fundraiser dinners. They listen to the stakeholders, as does the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Finds out in a press release? Half the time he's quoted in it.

Back to the minister: The minister may claim that it's an arm's-length process and he may claim that it's independent from political interference, but \$1.3 million from just 30 companies, all of which received government contracts? That just doesn't seem right. Can the minister honestly say that a donation to the Liberal Party has never been a factor in receiving a renewable energy contract?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, the process is absolutely, totally independent. It is conducted by the Independent Electricity System Operator. They have a fairness commissioner. The fairness commissioner has indicated quite clearly that they were objectively determined. There were no conflicts and no issues in any sense whatsoever on any of the contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: He may say in this House that donations have never influenced contracts, but let's just take a look at these wind contracts: 99.4% of all wind contracts were given to companies that made donations to the Liberal Party. Every company that has more than one turbine—you guessed it—donated to the Liberal Party. You want a wind contract in Ontario? Looks like you'd better open up your chequebook for a \$6,000 dinner with the Minister of Energy.

How does the minister defend this? How does he explain that almost every wind contract handed out went to a company that donated to the Liberal Party?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Before I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing. Before I move on, the whistling stops. So whoever it is, stop whistling.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, in the last award of contracts there were 16 contracts awarded, and this is

what the fairness adviser said about this project, "We are satisfied that the evaluation of the proposals was conducted strictly in accordance with the process set out in the RFP. We detected no bias or favouritism towards or against any particular proponent."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It goes on to say, "Overall, we are satisfied that the RFP procurement process was conducted in a fair, open and transparent manner and that the IESO took all steps necessary to meet all procurement practices"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds-Grenville.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —"related to fairness, openness and transparency."

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right after I asked for quiet, it happens a second time from the member direct. It's not going to happen again.

Finish. Please wrap up.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I would take the fairness adviser's advice over a politically excited question from the legislator.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning. My question is to the Minister of Energy this morning. The minister has continuously—and he's done it this morning—talked about an arm's-length process, an independent process in planning electricity projects in the province. However, 52 ministerial directives issued to the OPA and IESO since 2009 have been signed off on by the current minister or the former minister, the member from Scarborough Centre. Twenty-six of those directives dealt in whole or in part with the province's renewable energy strategy and affected companies who donated \$103 million to the Liberal Party, mentioned just moments ago by my colleague from the Ottawa Valley.

Does the minister actually believe it's really an arm's-length process if two ministers had to intervene personally 26 times?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Yes, there is a provision to provide directives to the various entities. I also receive requests from time to time from parties on the other side to look into particular issues that require addressing. It is not uncommon for us to look into them and, as a response to a request from the opposition, we do a directive and we help rectify a situation that needs rectification at the request of members from the other side.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister has ignored the experts, and there has to be a reason for that.

"Because the ministerial directions were quite specific about what was to be done, both the ministry and the OPA directed their energies to implementing the minis-

ter's requested actions as quickly as possible." That was the Auditor General in 2011.

Another quote: "In our survey of former OPA board members, 83% of respondents felt that the ministry's directives had negative impacts on the overall quality (i.e., accountability and transparency) of electricity planning." That was a different Auditor General in 2015.

Why did the minister ignore the advice of experts at the OPA when it came to directives that affected renewable energy companies? What possible motivation could they have had to override their own experts?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear, in our government political donations do not buy policy decisions. Any suggestion otherwise is completely false.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we're committed to a rational, depoliticized process. The Independent Electricity System Operator is independent. When a directive is issued, it's issued with due consideration for the facts. As I indicated, there are circumstances when matters need to be resolved in a way that's satisfactory to the public. Often, that's in response to a request from members on the other side.

We do make interventions in the interest of the public, even when the requests are made by members from the other side.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: The Auditors General have said that the reason we're in such a mess in this province when it comes to our electricity sector is because of the meddling of these government ministers.

Back to the minister: 26 times this minister and a former minister intervened in the energy sector in ways that affected companies that donated \$1.3 million to the Liberals. Eighty-three per cent of OPA board members surveyed told the current AG that those directives had a negative impact on electricity planning.

As ratepayers watch their bills skyrocket in Ontario, what other conclusions can they draw? How else can the minister explain the 26 times that he and a former minister intervened in the electricity sector in ways that affected companies that donated \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I challenge the opposition to bring forward how many of the winners of these so-called contracts also made contributions to the Progressive Conservative Party. They would find out almost in every case.

We have a long-term energy plan. In that long-term energy plan, we consulted broadly with the public.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I sit down, I'll wait for somebody to say something, other than the person giving the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again that the Independent Electricity System Operator makes those decisions independently. I will repeat again that on both sides of the House, they have \$9,000 or \$10,000 fundraisers for the same stakeholders who are contributing to the Liberal Party.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Why is this Liberal government cutting hospital services, closing beds and laying off front-line health care workers when major hospitals in Toronto and across Ontario are already overcrowded and filled beyond capacity?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Contrary to the assertions of the leader of the third party, we are investing more in health care. This year alone, there's \$1 billion more contained in our budget for the health care sector that the third party voted against. So where is that money going? An additional \$270 million for home and community care, \$75 million for community-based hospice and palliative care, \$85 million for community health centres, CHCs, and \$345 million for hospitals.

We are continuing to support the health care sector. We're getting better outcomes for patients. We're investing more in health care.

I do think that the third party should actually take a look at what we're doing and support those changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I see what this Liberal government is doing to the hospital sector. I see it very well.

According to the government's own information, many of Ontario's largest hospitals and critical regional health centres are running at above 100% capacity. Here in Toronto, the Hospital for Sick Children more often than not has no available beds. London Health Sciences: no available beds. Hospitals in Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Brantford, Peterborough, Hamilton and right across this province—the hospitals have no available beds.

How can the Acting Premier defend the Liberals' cuts to our hospitals when the government's own numbers prove that major hospitals are already overcrowded and forcing patients to wait for the care that they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The fundamental change that is under way in our health care system—and it's a system in transformation—is about building more capacity outside of our hospitals. We still have too many people in hospitals who do not need to be in hospital, who do not want to be in hospital, and that's why we're building the capacity in community—

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So if the NDP's solution is to build more hospital beds when, actually, the demand is outside of hospitals—that's where we need to build capacity: outside. That's why we're investing in hospices, in

palliative care and in community care: because that's where people need the care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OECD says that the safe limit on hospital occupancy in countries like the UK is 85%. But here in Ontario this Liberal government has forced many of our hospitals to operate at over 100% capacity. That means long wait times for patients in the ER because every bed in the hospital is already full. It makes it harder to control the spread of infection, and it puts pressure on cleaning staff. It means that patients end up being treated on stretchers or in hallways because there is no room left in the hospital.

How can this Acting Premier think that cutting hospital services, laying off nurses and health care workers and closing beds will do anything but make overcrowding worse in Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's evident from this question that the third party does not understand the challenges in our health care system nor the solutions. If their solution is to build more hospital capacity—the most expensive kind of health care there is in the hospital—instead of investing in the community, well, we have a fundamental disagreement.

Our whole approach to health care is about providing the care that people need, and that is at home, in the community, in long-term care, in hospice and in palliative care—outside of hospitals. Why the third party wants to build capacity when, actually, the need is to build capacity in the community, I do not understand. I actually believe that if she spoke to her health critic she would understand that the capacity we need to build is outside of hospitals.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is back to the Acting Premier.

I don't know how a government would think that you don't need hospitals as part of your health care system. It makes no sense whatsoever.

It's not just that Liberal cuts mean hospitals are overcrowded. Records received by New Democrats reveal that, in fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Records received by New Democrats actually show—unbelievably show—that “the ministry does not have standards, guidelines, policies, or best practices with respect to hospital bed occupancy as it relates to hospital operations.” Why not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I'm tempted to remind the third party that their campaign position was to cut an additional 600,000 jobs—

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —\$600 million. They even had a volunteer. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo actually volunteered—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So rather than cutting health care, we are expanding funding to health care, and we are building new hospitals.

The member from Cambridge has visited the Cambridge hospital that is under construction, providing important care in that community. We have 35 different hospital projects under way because we do believe hospitals are an essential part of the health care system, but they're not the only part of the health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government doesn't have standards. They have no standards, guidelines or policies for hospital occupancy at all—it is unfathomable that that is the case in 2016—and no plans or policies to deal with overcrowding, that this government is forcing on hospitals.

How can the Liberal government run a health care system without any policy whatsoever to deal with overcrowding in our hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just need to remind the leader of the third party that we are building hospitals across this province and they are being built to the highest possible standards. We also have the Excellent Care for All Act, which requires hospitals to publicly report on quality indicators that matter to patients, like infection rates. We are seeing improved quality because we have a focus on public reporting of quality indicators. For the leader of the third party to suggest that we have no standards in our hospitals, in our health care system, borderlines on the ridiculous.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is ridiculous is that this government doesn't even know whether or not they have policies on overcrowding in hospitals and we're informing them for the first time that, in fact, they don't.

It is unbelievable. The minister talks about building new hospitals. Does she talk about the reduction in the number of beds overall that's happening in this province? Obviously, she's not. There's a silent crisis in the health care system here in Ontario. Liberals have made overcrowding in Ontario hospitals the norm and this Liberal government has literally no plan whatsoever to deal with it. Instead, their plan is more cuts, more layoffs and more bed closures. People deserve quality health care when and where they need it. Ontarians deserve a government that shares that priority.

Will the Acting Premier take a hard look at overcrowding in Ontario's hospitals, do the right thing and stop the cuts to our hospital system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's talk about what was in the budget that the NDP voted against when it comes to health care:

—more than \$345 million to all publicly funded hospitals, including a 1% base increase;

—\$175 million to provide patients with access to more services in new and redeveloped hospitals for targeted priority services such as organ and tissue transplants;

—\$160 million to improve access and wait times for hospital services, including additional procedures such as cataract, knee and hip replacements and knee arthroscopies;

—\$7.5 million for small, northern and rural hospitals in addition to the \$20-million Small and Rural Hospital Transformation Fund;

—\$6 million for mental health hospitals.

These are examples of investments we're making in the health care system that the NDP chose to vote against.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Experts continue to voice opposition to your decision to cut off IBI therapy to children over the age of five. On April 7, Autism Ontario put out a statement on the new autism strategy. They said:

"Families who have been on the waiting list for IBI services for many years are being doubly penalized ... by learning they will now not receive this service....

"This devastating news has added to the financial burden borne by families of children and youth with ASD and adds to the stress they experience as caregivers."

The provincial advocate, Autism Ontario, families, therapists and many others have expressed concern over your announcement. How many more experts have to oppose your decision for you to allow children over the age of five to access IBI therapy?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm always pleased to get up in the House and speak about what we're doing to help children with ASD.

We are talking to the experts. We are talking with parent groups. We are speaking with experts in the field and the child advocate. In fact, I met with him again this morning. I know what his current thinking and advice is. I'm very appreciative of that.

As I've said before, as we move to the new program, the goal is to have more intensive services of a longer duration that are very individualized for all children with ASD. In the meantime, families whose children are on the wait-list can go off that wait-list and into immediate service. We're working closely with the service providers to make sure families are well supported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The only "individualized" that's happening is you're going from IBI wait-list to ABA wait-list.

Back to the minister: CityNews aired a story last week about Dr. Ian Dawe and a parent on Twitter who asked him if their child would benefit from IBI therapy even though he was six years old. Dr. Dawe stated there is "no

evidence that your child might not benefit from it." Minister, Dr. Dawe is your expert. He chaired the panel that wrote the report that you say your decision is based upon. Dr. Dawe goes on to say, "What the government has funded was not what we recommended."

1100

Listen to Dr. Dawe. Listen to Autism Ontario. Listen to the thousands of families being abandoned by your government and allow children over the age of five access to IBI.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Just to be clear, I don't believe Dr. Dawe is part of the current clinical expert panel. Having said that, I recognize and respect the work he has done with this government in the past and, quite frankly, I find his comments unfortunate and regrettable. I'll tell you why I say that: because our goal is to get children who have autism faster and more appropriate services, regardless of the age, and to make sure that we transition to the new program in a way that supports those kids.

Of course, our advice is based on the clinical expert committee, and that report is available on our website, but we're still meeting with the clinical expert committee. We're meeting with parents. We're meeting with the alliance of parents for autism and they're going to help us with the implementation to make sure families are well supported going forward.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberal government has decided that Ontarians concerned about the government's changes to autism therapy will face serious limitations on their ability to purchase non-partisan advertisements, but the government can spend as much as it wants before an election campaign and during an election campaign. Why is the government putting limits on what concerned parents can say while giving the Liberal government free rein to advertise as much as it wants?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that there is a consensus in this province that we need to make changes to political fundraising. I think there is a strong consensus that we should actually make some important changes, including banning corporate donations, union donations and so on.

We are moving forward with changes. We invited all parties to participate before that legislation was even introduced, and it's highly unfortunate that the third party has chosen not to attend meetings. I was very pleased, though, to hear last week that they have come forward with some ideas on what the changes are that we need to make. We are really hoping we're going to be able to move forward together to make the changes that the people of this province expect us to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Acting Premier: Last year, your government created a new loophole in the Government Advertising Act. Ontario's non-partisan Auditor General said that this loophole would "gut the province's landmark law prohibiting partisan government advertising." The AG continued, "These ... changes would allow the government to spend public dollars on partisan advertising with little of the current independent oversight."

Why is the Liberal government putting strict limits on non-partisan public interest groups like the Ontario Autism Coalition and no limits on partisan government ads?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Ontario is the first and only jurisdiction in Canada, and one of the very few in the world, to enact legislation that bans government-paid partisan advertising in newspapers, in magazines, on radio and on television. We passed this historic legislation because we are against government using taxpayer dollars for partisan advertising.

If you remember back to 2003, prior to the last election, you will remember examples of partisan advertising paid for by taxpayers, when the then Premier of the day appeared in advertisements paid by the taxpayers. We banned that. We remain committed to banning that. You will find that Ontario remains one of the very few jurisdictions in the world to ban partisan advertising.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Minister, we hear regularly about your expressed concern about road safety, as well as pedestrian safety, as one of the government's top priorities. In the most recent provincial statistics, there were 100 pedestrian fatalities making up 19% of all motor vehicle fatalities in Ontario. This is a far cry from the almost 200 reported in the late 1980s. However, more needs to be done on this particular file.

Recently, I received an email from Mathew, a grade 10 student from Dr. Norman Bethune, expressing concern about distracted drivers as well as pedestrian safety.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House, as well as my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, what our government is doing to help improve pedestrian safety?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her question on this very important topic. Of course, it is a very timely question as today marks the first day of pedestrian safety week. I agree that there is always more we can do to help keep our pedestrians safe here in the province of Ontario. I want to assure the member that this is an issue that the Ministry of Transportation takes very seriously.

With the passing of Bill 31 last June, drivers and cyclists—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay. If he does it again, he'll get a second one.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —are now required to yield the entire roadway at pedestrian crossovers and school crossings. And since 2003, we've also doubled the maximum fines—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Timmins–James Bay, second time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —for drivers running a red light, and we've introduced demerit points for those drivers committing crossover violations.

We also know that our municipal partners have an important role to play in pedestrian safety, which is why we continue to assist them in enacting traffic-calming measures, better-marked crosswalks and enhanced pedestrian signals.

We know that our work is not done, which is why we'll continue to work with all of our safety partners to keep pedestrians safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for this response. I know there's no easy solution to change drivers' behaviour, but those living in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt will be happy to know that we are continuing to work very hard on this file to keep all Ontarians safe.

Distracted driving can result in a variety of road accidents, as well as death. I know that impaired driving can also be a leading cause of accidents in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. With the May long weekend around the corner, I know that the OPP will be on high alert for any impaired drivers.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please provide more information on what the government is doing to help prevent drunk driving on our roads?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, that's a great question from the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

We absolutely understand as a government that impaired driving continues to occur on Ontario's roads. Again, we know there is certainly always more that can be done.

Since 2003, our government has introduced a number of new laws and penalties to help fight impaired driving. These include an immediate 90-day driver's licence suspension and seven-day vehicle impoundments for drivers who, as they say, blow over the legal limit; strengthening sanctions against drivers caught within the warning range; and mandatory remedial education and ignition interlock for convicted impaired drivers.

Recent statistics show that our initiatives are working to curb drinking and driving. Ontario had the lowest impaired driving offence rate in Canada in 2014, which is 47% lower than the national average.

But until no mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends are lost to impaired driving, we will continue fighting to make sure that our roads are as safe as they can be.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Acting Premier. Earlier this month, I wrote to

Ontario's auto czar, Ray Tanguay, regarding Ontario's climate change action plan. More details of this plan have emerged today, including dramatic targets for "a zero-emission or hybrid electric vehicle in every multicar household driveway within eight years."

It seems this government refuses to allow business in the free market to drive innovation and demand. We've already seen manufacturers pack up and leave the province, putting thousands of people out of work. Now the Premier is telling the few remaining manufacturers in this industry that it's her way or the highway.

Speaker, this plan represents a crushing shift for Ontario's \$16-billion auto industry and the over 100,000 auto workers across Ontario. How many jobs will be lost across Ontario if this Liberal plan is implemented?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the minister will want to speak to the supplementary, but I do need to say that this government is committed to taking strong action when it comes to climate change. We feel the responsibility to the planet, to our kids, to our grandkids. We are prepared to take that action.

The third party, although it pretends that it supports—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The opposition says that it supports action on climate change. The leader even said that he had the support of the entire caucus. But what we're seeing is that there is support for the words but there is not support for any actions. So we are prepared to take actions.

1110

This is not easy change, but this is vitally important change, Speaker. I'm proud of the direction we're going. We made a commitment. We're implementing that commitment.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds–Grenville, second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do wish that the opposition would actually be prepared to support the action and not just say the words.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Acting Premier: The Minister of the Environment has already indicated his desire to close down Ontario's nuclear industry, and today we have confirmed that his plans will threaten Ontario's vital auto sector as well.

Speaker, you would know that Ontario has lost General Motors in Windsor and the Ford plant near St. Thomas, and the GM plant in Oshawa could easily be the next to go, taking with it \$5.7 billion in annual GDP and over 33,000 well-paying jobs. Clearly, the Minister of the Environment's plan is one that could tip the scale and drive auto manufacturers and thousands of good, paying jobs out of Ontario.

Is the Liberal government committed to working with and building up Ontario's auto sector, or does the Acting Premier agree with the Minister of the Environment, who

said that Ontario's auto industry is "missing courageous leadership"?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the opposition has zero credibility on this issue, absolutely zero—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, if you say something else, you'll be gone.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When the auto sector was facing huge challenges, the opposition party said, "Let them fail. Let them close." We stepped in. We stepped in with the support of the federal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll go there. The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

The member from Nipissing, come to order, and the member from Renfrew, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, they wanted to abandon the sector. They wanted those jobs to be lost. Five hundred thousand Ontario families depend on the auto sector for their livelihood. It's a vitally important sector for us. We will continue to support the auto sector, even though the opposition party says that we should abandon that sector.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, the Minister of Energy told this House that Ontario earns a net profit from the surplus electricity that we export to other jurisdictions. He said the IESO will confirm that last year we made a net profit of \$350 million. Speaker, this would be an astonishing reversal of what the Auditor General described in her most recent report. She said that between 2009 and 2014 Ontario was paid \$3.1 billion less for its electricity exports than what we paid to generate that power. That is a net loss of \$3.1 billion. Why is the minister still using the term "net profit" to describe billions of dollars in net losses?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The import/export of electricity is the responsibility, in terms of governance, of the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO. They trade in electricity imports and exports on a daily basis, as do all of our surrounding jurisdictions: New York state, Quebec, Manitoba etc. We work amongst ourselves.

You often hear about selling or giving electricity away, Mr. Speaker. That does occasionally happen. But we never hear of the times that we sell it to Quebec, for example, and earn \$15 million or \$20 million in three or four days, when they're short of electricity in the wintertime

They will indicate that there was a net benefit last year of \$320 million on the import and export of electricity, and that supports the quote that I often use from the third-party former Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, in the past the minister has had to stand in this House and withdraw the claim that Ontario was making a profit on these sales. He has had to withdraw.

According to the IESO, last year Ontario exported nearly 22,600 gigawatt hours of electricity. According to the minister himself, the average cost of producing that electricity was \$83 per megawatt hour, so the total cost to generate that exported electricity can be roughly estimated at about \$1.9 billion.

Will the minister either confirm that Ontario exported electricity last year at a price that was \$350 million above the amount it cost ratepayers to pay for it, or will he withdraw his statement that Ontarians earn a net profit on electricity exports and stop misleading the House?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No. I told the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I advise the member to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If the member does not withdraw, I will name him. The member from Toronto–Danforth is named.

Mr. Tabuns was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There is a lot of confusion on the import and export of electricity, Mr. Speaker. However, I want to refer—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: However, I want to refer to an expert on the subject: “Any power we sell to the US, to Quebec, to Manitoba, or power they sell us, is surplus power.”

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: “It’s opportunity power. It’s pure profit, in terms that it’s power that otherwise would go to waste or not be generated.”

That’s a quote from the former Minister of Energy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I think the member—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

You’re finished.

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. It’s encouraging that we finally have recognition by one-time naysayers that climate change is real and that we need to work together to reduce carbon emissions if we’re going to mitigate the serious effects of climate change.

We know that early adoption of carbon pricing is going to be good for Ontario, both from an economic and an environmental standpoint, and it’s going to drive down costs and give businesses a competitive edge.

Ontario has committed to a 15% reduction in GHGs by 2020, 37% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

Speaker, could the minister please give this House more details on the proposed timeline for early adoption of carbon pricing in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for an excellent question.

Presuming, or hoping, that this legislation will soon pass—Bill 172, and then subsequently, the government would pass the regulations associated with that—we would probably see our first carbon auction early in 2017, before the spring. That would set up the first trading market. Later, within a year or so, we would start to negotiate the linking with Quebec and California, to open up what will be one of the largest and most stable carbon markets, as well.

We have a lot of work to do. We have very close collaboration with the auto sector, with mining and with forestry, because this is a very, very significant investment—a pretty much unprecedented one in all of those industries.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I’d like to thank the minister for his response and for being a champion of the environment here in Ontario. Taking leadership on this issue is no doubt challenging, and the minister is never one to shy away from a good challenge.

1120

The early adoption of carbon pricing by passing Bill 172 is of the utmost importance. We know that, through the committee process, this government worked closely with the NDP in order to strengthen the legislation. We listened to stakeholders during public presentations in committee and made some very thoughtful changes to the legislation. In particular, the updates focused on making the bill more accountable and more transparent.

Could the minister please offer this House more details on the changes that were made at the committee stage to improve the legislation?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I do agree, and I want to thank my critic in the New Democratic Party.

There are a couple of things that came forward out of that process. One of them was a low-income lens on all of our investments and the reporting with that. I want to thank the third party; we worked very closely on that.

Senator Kevin de León, the senator pro tem in the California senate, has developed a model program that we think is quite exciting.

We also worked with the third party to go to annual rather than five-year reporting, to align with the annual investment fund.

We took what we heard from stakeholders through that process at committee and looked at several helpful suggestions that came through. Many of those changes relate to reporting, accountability and fairness. This cap-and-trade system here in Ontario will probably have the highest standard of reporting and verification—certainly in North America, if not the world.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the energy minister. Natural gas provides 76% of home heating across this province, including in the city of Ottawa. With a wave of Glen Murray's magic wand, this government wants that to go away.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As the member does know, we refer to someone either by their riding or by their title. Make sure it happens, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —he wants that to go away. But that magic will come at a price. We know that the annual cost is at least \$3,000 to the average homeowner. I ask you, how is the single mother on FRO, family responsibility, going to be able to get that money? Where is the senior citizen on a fixed income going to find that money? Where is the young couple pursuing their dream of buying their first home going to find that money? Who is going to pay for that extra \$3,000 a year when the government kicks people off of natural gas?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think it's a very fair question for the member to ask.

As members would know, there's been an extensive series of consultations with stakeholders, probably the most intensive consultation that we've seen in the energy sector, with respect to this issue.

But let's look at some of the facts that indicate where we're going. Our 2016 budget provides that cap-and-trade will take \$24 per year off of residential bills and, on average, will not cause any increase, notwithstanding that particular policy. Throughout the process, we've also had tax credits that have benefited residents of Ontario to the extent of \$400 million every year. We are going to have cap-and-trade revenue that will be allocated to protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Is there anyone in this House or in this province that believes this Liberal government will do anything but increase the price of hydro in the province of Ontario? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker, and I

think if the minister wanted to look at the facts, he'd look at the last 13 years this government has been in office and how prices have skyrocketed.

I'm not sure why the minister wouldn't clarify who is paying before this—because Adrian Morrow was quite clear in the Globe and Mail that the plan will cover the increased costs of electricity.

Is the government writing a cheque to every single natural-gas-heated household for \$3,000 a year annually? Where will the money come from? Will it end up on everyone else's hydro bill?

There is no doubt that this plan will not only cost the people who are being kicked off natural gas more money, it will also cost everyone else on their hydro bill.

I ask the minister one more time: How much more will it cost everyone and where—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When this government said it was going to go off dirty, cheap coal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —they said it could never be done. We actually accomplished it, and at this time we have the cleanest electricity system in North America, if not in the world.

Similarly, going forward with cap-and-trade, we will create the mitigation measures that will keep—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are a couple of members who have already been warned. The next step is you're named.

One wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Rates went up in Ontario by 2.5% about a month or two ago. Rates at BC Hydro went up by 4%; Saskatchewan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, Dr. Ian Dawe, the chair of the government's own expert panel on autism, came out against the government's plan. He said, "What the government has funded was not what we recommended."

Speaker, you can't claim to be making decisions based on science if you're ignoring the experts behind the science. This is about vulnerable kids who deserve access to the life-changing therapy that they were promised. It's time to put kids first. This Liberal government needs to stop thinking that they know more than the clinicians and speak to the experts who are sounding the alarm. What is

the point of appointing an expert panel if you're just going to arrogantly ignore them?

Does the Deputy Premier disagree with the chair of her government's own expert panel on autism?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's important for me to say yet again that Dr. Dawe is not the current chair of the clinical expert committee. He was. He was.

Also, it's very clear, if anyone is looking at where we are bringing this program forward, that we have based our designs and our goals for the program on that clinical committee that, yes, he did chair before. We're continuing to work with the current committee and we're continuing to listen to experts.

I would also say that the member of the third party was quite supportive of some of these principles that the committee spoke about. She said late last year that for children waiting for age-sensitive treatment, which helps autistic children cope better with the world around them, the lists are long, and that studies after studies show more effective treatments happen when they're delivered before the age of seven. So she supports that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Okay. Speaker, this doesn't even make sense. He was the chair of the committee who put forward the panel that you made your decision on. Now he doesn't agree with you, so you throw him under the bus. It doesn't make sense.

The chair of the government's panel is only one of a growing number of voices of clinicians and experts coming forward. Minutes from the October 2015 meeting of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education state that 93% of those receiving IBI are five and older—93%, Speaker. That means that the government knew back in 2015 that this plan would only leave 7% of children in need in life-changing therapy. I guess now we know where the five-year age cap came from. It's obvious that this decision was all about money.

This government is balancing the budget on the backs of kids with autism. Will the Deputy Premier admit that this decision was based on saving money and reverse—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, Speaker, I've said it before and I'll say it again: I'm very concerned about the tactics of the opposition. It is not a partisan issue. We're investing 333 million new dollars and creating 16,000 new spaces.

I heard what Dr. Dawe said. I'm puzzled by what he said. The reality is that the work that has been developed on this program is based in large part on what the clinical expert committee said. I've met with the current members of the clinical expert committee. They are going to play an ongoing role—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain, second time.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —along with other stakeholders as we work to implement this program to get the right kind of programs in place—

Interjection.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I think we all want the same thing: We want the best support and outcomes for children with ASD, and we're working on that. We're doing that through this new program, and we're supporting those children who are languishing on a wait-list by putting them into immediate service. We'll continue to make sure they get the information and the communication that they deserve.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Minister, as you know, our government is committed to improving how we deliver social assistance as part of our efforts to support vulnerable Ontarians, so that they can participate in our economy and in our communities.

This is why our government is introducing a new reloadable payment card. Although we encourage all of our clients to use direct bank deposit to ensure that they receive their payments in a timely manner that is secure, efficient and convenient, many of them cannot open or maintain a bank account. These are some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how a reloadable payment card will make life easier for Ontarians on social assistance?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the member for the question.

The reloadable payment card is one way we are moving social assistance into the 21st century and providing better service to our most vulnerable clients.

The card works like a debit card, but does not require a bank account. The new card will make it unnecessary for clients to rely on expensive cheque-cashing services or put themselves at personal risk by carrying large amounts of cash. It will offer four free ATM withdrawals per month and unlimited in-store or online payments and purchases, and it will also increase security with PIN and chip technology. Clients will also be receiving support from their caseworkers in learning how to use the card.

We've begun the test phase of reloadable payment cards with clients who volunteer. We'll get their feedback before we roll out the card more broadly this summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister for her answer.

This government clearly recognizes the importance of improving services to clients as part of its wide-reaching improvements to social assistance in Ontario. Having safer and less expensive access to benefits is important for the most vulnerable among us.

I understand that local ODSP offices have been provided with information to help them reach out to community partners, including the police and advocacy groups, to raise awareness about the new card. It is crucial that these service delivery improvements also make efforts to enhance the social inclusion of clients, and it is great to hear that this new reloadable payment card will contribute to this goal.

Will the minister elaborate on how the reloadable payment card will make it safer and easier for people to receive and use their social assistance benefits?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Moving to a reloadable payment card means that clients have more control over their money, with the ability to make point-of-sale purchases and online payments and purchases. The card will not identify the cardholder as a social assistance client or a recipient of government services.

In fact, we have already received positive feedback from the front lines. An ODSP manager from Windsor said, “The reloadable payment card helped one of our ODSP clients ... by ensuring that he did not have to carry cash, which would have made him vulnerable to theft, and made it easy for him to purchase the things that he needed. The cards are also easy to issue. It’s nice to have a simplified process that also helps clients.”

We’re committed to making life easier for our clients, and the reloadable payment card is a prime example of that.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Speaker, there seems to be no limit to how much pain this government will inflict on homeowners and small business in order to get their way. It’s been confirmed in a leaked cabinet document that Ontario is going to eliminate natural gas, the energy source that provides 76% of the province’s heating. This is the energy source that all analysts have said is the most efficient way to provide heat to homes and businesses. You’re going to force them to heat electrically in a province with the highest electricity prices on the continent.

We know that the environment minister doesn’t care what it costs people to live, but we do. This government needs to adopt a realistic plan to cut emissions without crippling our economy or hurting families and small businesses. Will you commit to that today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the opposition says, we are not banning natural gas at all—period. Number two: We have a very robust—the Minister of Energy could tell you about this—rural extension program for natural gas, which we’re very sup-

portive of. It’s a very critical part of our energy and climate change strategies, Mr. Speaker. We will, as other jurisdictions have, reduce emissions from buildings, but that does not come at the expense—actually, it’s the opposition that doesn’t want to support the cap-and-trade revenues going into the auto sector, going to families to help lower their costs, building the capacity of our electricity system. They have a system that actually would leave Ontarians stranded. We believe in investing in Ontario businesses and in natural gas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of the Environment changes every day. I know his own Minister of Energy would say this guy’s all over the map.

Speaker, the fossil fuel elimination plan will cost 42,500 jobs in the oil and natural gas sectors, and will drive up the cost of doing business for everyone in the province of Ontario. They want to drive people to heat their homes electrically and drive electric cars. The question remains, where will they get the electricity? If you’re cutting off natural gas to homes, presumably you’re going to shut down natural-gas-fired power plants. And with the environment minister saying we’re going to be shutting down nuclear plants within 10 to 20 years, where will you get the electricity?

Is it not time to rethink this strategy? Stop pretending you can do something so that you can appear to be the green champions, and begin to think of ways to reduce our carbon footprint that will not destroy families and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The opposition famously said that they wouldn’t read the budget before they made up their mind. Maybe that’s why they have a problem, Mr. Speaker. Because let me read from the budget, page 63: “The province is also developing programs to help communities partner with utilities to extend access to natural gas supplies. Ontario will introduce a loan program to support access to natural gas in 2016.” And it goes on.

The budget and the climate action plan are compatible. This government has a very strong plan to invest in energy in this province and in reducing climate change. These are complementary, non-contradictory initiatives. Maybe next time they’ll read the budget and then decide how they’re going to vote for it. They won’t be so confused, Mr. Speaker.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have two order paper questions on the docket, numbers 565 and 566, that I believe are now late. They’re over five months late. I would like the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to respond to these two questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to defer to the deputy House leader. They are overdue and I'm going to ask him to advise the House.

Hon. James J. Bradley: To answer your question, Mr. Speaker, I will look into the matter and ensure that it is resolved to the satisfaction of members of the House.

MEMBER'S ANNIVERSARY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: On a point of order, I'd like to wish my wife a happy 46th wedding anniversary today.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I have two order paper questions dated November 30 that are overdue, numbers 541 and 543, for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, I am told the questions are overdue. I'll defer to you to give us a response, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again, Mr. Speaker, to anyone who rises in the House with this particular matter, I'll be happy to look into it as deputy House leader and resolve it to the satisfaction of members of the assembly.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd just like to welcome to this House two entrepreneurs and business people from my riding: Bob and Heather Kerby from Starline Production are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct my record from earlier this morning. During lead questions, I inadvertently said the wrong number for the amount that's been raised by the Liberal Party when referring to renewable energy projects. The number is actually \$1.3 million.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: On behalf of the Minister of Education and the MPP for Guelph, I want to welcome Justine Richardson, mother, and Anna Sophia Deaton, sister, of our page captain today, William Deaton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lorne Coe: From the Ontario Sewer and Water-main Construction Association: Patrick McManus, Harry Bauman, Vince Bellissimo, Larry Taylor and Sam Dyson. Welcome to Queen's Park. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, I am honoured to represent the people of Perth–Wellington. I rely on their feedback to share their concerns and stories in this Legislature. I am pleased that so many took the time to respond to my last survey.

Top of mind for my constituents are skyrocketing energy costs. I heard heartbreaking stories about the impact that high bills are having. One couple had to sell their home, as they couldn't afford their bills.

When asked what this government's top priority should be, two answers dominated the responses: reduce energy costs and reduce government spending.

Sadly, this government has done neither during its 13 years in power. When it comes to the government's plans to introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, a staggering 77% of my constituents who responded are opposed. Nearly everyone who responded does not support the government's changes to the estate administration tax. In fact, 88% of respondents told me that they are very concerned with the amount of debt this government has racked up.

Over 90% of respondents have not received the 15% reduction in auto insurance rate that this government promised them.

Speaker, as you may recall, I passed a resolution in this House calling for fair and transparent infrastructure investments, free from political considerations. Some 98% of respondents agreed. The evidence is clear: Politics must stay out of infrastructure funding.

I appreciate this advice and will continue to stand up for the issues that matter to us in Perth–Wellington.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Imagine this scenario: You go to the hospital expecting your first child and your wife goes into distress on the delivery table. At one point, you even think you might lose her. She seems close to death. Then, to compound your fear and the situation, you recognize and realize that you have absolutely no claim over the

baby if your wife dies, even though you are legally married in the province of Ontario.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the case for LGBTQ folk. That is the case for some 21 parents who are now engaged in a charter challenge, a lawsuit against this very government. That is the case unless this government passes Cy and Ruby's Act, which would equalize the status of heterosexual couples and those who are LGBTQ, who do not have the same rights of parenthood and who may have to adopt their own children.

I ask, why are we in this predicament? The bill, Cy and Ruby's Act, passed second reading. We're waiting on the government to act but they're not. And now they're spending taxpayers' dollars fighting the very parents who want equality. Please say it ain't so, Mr. Speaker. Please, to the government side, if you have any impact on your cabinet members, please speak to them. These are your constituents.

ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Speaker, I rise today in honour of Yom Ha'atzmaut, the national day of Israel, celebrated last week.

The national day of Israel commemorates the Israeli declaration of independence, signed in 1948, which marked the official foundation of the modern state of Israel. The establishment of the modern state of Israel was a profound moment for the Jewish people. It marked a creation for a homeland for a people who have, throughout history, experienced exile and persecution. Sixty-eight years have passed since independence was achieved, and in this time Israel has grown into a strong and prosperous nation and a leader in the international community.

Here in Ontario, Israeli Independence Day is an important day to take pride in our own vibrant Jewish communities and the invaluable contributions made by members of Ontario's Jewish community to the social, economic and cultural life of our province.

Here at Queen's Park, we celebrated those contributions by joining together on the lawn to raise the flag of Israel.

While in Israel this week, our Premier is leading an important trade mission, meeting with Israeli leaders and innovators to further strengthen the already strong relationship between Ontario and Israel.

To all celebrating in Ontario and abroad, congratulations on Israel's 68th Independence Day, and best wishes for the next 68 years of achievement.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WEEK

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to recognize the first Young Professionals Week in Ontario.

Young Professionals Week focuses on what it means to be a young professional in this province and to educate our communities and employers on the importance of retaining and supporting young professionals.

The Haliburton Highlands Young Professionals Network is a platform to engage people under 40 in meaningful conversation and action on the economic, social and cultural well-being of our community. To celebrate the week-long initiative, the Haliburton Highlands Youth Professionals Network committee will be sharing what is important to young professionals and how they impact the future of this province. The local organization recognizes that, even in rural Ontario, our knowledge economy is expanding and the cultural fabric of our communities is diversifying, so we should create and identify opportunities for professionals and community development with the Haliburton Highlands workforce.

We need to develop our youth strength, build upon existing skills, and address the skills mismatch in our community and in our province. The skills gap is costing our economy \$24.3 billion a year and \$3.7 billion in forgone tax revenue. We need to train and educate our youth for the jobs of today and anticipate the needs of tomorrow. The success of our children will ultimately drive the success of our province and our country. So let's share great stories this week with #YPweekON.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise on behalf of my London-Fanshawe constituents to discuss this government's silent crisis: health care. No matter who you are, where you live or how much money you make, your health and the health of your family is your first priority. But the constant decline of our health care system is hurting families and communities across Ontario.

This is especially true in my hometown of London, where the effects of this government's ongoing cuts to health care are obvious. Today's revelations from my party's freedom-of-information request show that the University site of London Health Sciences has been running at over 100% capacity for all 10 quarters of the reporting period—at least two and a half years.

At the same time, as many Ontario hospitals are filled beyond capacity, the Wynne Liberals keep cutting hospital services, laying off front-line care workers and closing beds. It's disappointing that this Liberal government refuses to listen and even admit that hospital overcrowding is a problem in Ontario. We all know that the health care of our families is our most important priority, yet this government has spent years refusing to meet the health care needs of Ontarians. Now is the time to stop this crisis in health care before it gets worse.

ASTRONUTS KIDS' SPACE CLUB

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to highlight a great organization from my riding of Newmarket-Aurora. This past weekend, AstroNuts Kids' Space Club hosted its fifth annual "What's Up in Space" camp at the David Dunlap Observatory. The day included a variety of science and space-related activities, including a live chat with astronaut Tim Peake from his post at the International Space Station.

AstroNuts Kids' Space Club, a not-for-profit group, was founded by Ray Bielecki and his 13-year-old son Brett in response to Brett's desire to learn more about space exploration. During their five years of operation, AstroNuts Kids' Space Club has become very active throughout our community by educating elementary children in space and science. Organizations like AstroNuts inspire children to learn. AstroNuts shows children the connection between what they are doing in the classroom and how it applies in the real world.

AstroNuts space camp also reflects the strong aerospace heritage of my riding of Newmarket–Aurora. For years, residents of Newmarket–Aurora have worked in aerospace at all levels for companies like de Havilland, A.V. Roe and, now, Bombardier. From the Alouette 1 satellite through the STOL aircraft of de Havilland and now Bombardier's Dash-8 series aircraft and Challenger corporate jets, Newmarket–Aurora residents have provided the expertise to put Canada at the forefront of the aerospace industry. I have no doubts that AstroNuts space camp will build the next generation of aerospace workers.

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TAMIL GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Lorne Coe: We take time this week to remember the loss of many innocent victims who perished during the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. This is the seventh year since the Battle of Mullivaikal in May 2009, when civilians were shelled by government forces within a no-fire zone as they attempted to flee. According to the UN Secretary-General's panel of experts on accountability in Sri Lanka, it was estimated that approximately 40,000 civilians may have been killed in the final months of the conflict as a result of this indiscriminate shelling. Regrettably, there's been insufficient progress in seeking justice for victims of genocide.

This month, Speaker, members of the Tamil community around the globe gathered to participate in memorial services to remember their loved ones. I stand with the members of the Tamil community here in Ontario and those who support efforts for peace and reconciliation. They may be gone but they will not be forgotten.

CARDIAC CARE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On Friday, I was proud to join the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in my riding of Barrie to announce capital funding for the advanced cardiac care centre at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, where the minister was impressed by the overwhelming volunteer spirit and community support. These people have raised millions of dollars and donated thousands of volunteer hours.

When it comes to the heart, time is muscle. For every minute that a heart attack patient goes without treatment, heart muscle is dying. Currently, the north Simcoe-

Muskoka region doesn't provide advanced cardiac care services within its boundaries and, as a result, most patients cannot get to the nearest cardiac care centre in Newmarket within 90 minutes. However, this will soon change. Construction of this 14,000-square-foot facility will begin this fall, and by this time next year, RVH will be able to provide this life-saving treatment to people who live north of Barrie in places such as Midland, Penetanguishene, Collingwood and Bracebridge.

The centre will house catheterization labs where cardiac specialists can provide diagnostics and interventions such as angiograms and angioplasties to give heart patients access to faster treatment, a shorter hospital stay and less travel time.

This investment reconfirms our government's commitment to top-quality health care, not only in our region but right across the province. I'm proud that our government is improving health care and putting patients first.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I rise to speak about an important investment that has been made in my riding of Brampton–Springdale. Residents, environmentalists and community groups got together this weekend for an announcement important to Brampton residents, not only today but for generations to come. The Living City Foundation was the recipient of funding from the provincial Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund for their work across the GTA and projects that encourage and implement a better environment for us and our future generations, including this project to protect habitat and species.

I was joined by the Living City Foundation at Heart Lake Conservation Area to make the announcement about their project and the funding support that they will receive. The announcement was made at the aboriginal Medicine Wheel Garden site in the park, where some of the project will be installed.

Each year, the fund provides financial support for grassroots efforts to protect the health of our Great Lakes watershed. I am pleased that this year there are two projects in my riding of Brampton–Springdale that will be receiving funding.

This project is a wonderful example of how residents, city scientists and community groups, along with the province of Ontario and the TRCA, have worked together to achieve a common goal, which is to protect local wildlife populations. This year, two organizations have received funding for environmental projects, including the Living City Foundation and Evergreen.

This project by the Living City Foundation is an important one, and I'm proud of all the work being done in Brampton–Springdale with investments made by the provincial Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund. It is not only important for everybody, including residents, to work together to achieve a common goal for our future generations in this city, but also to help protect local wildlife populations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD CARE WAITING LISTS), 2016 LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA GARDE D'ENFANTS ET LA PETITE ENFANCE (LISTES D'ATTENTE POUR LES SERVICES DE GARDE)

Mr. Potts moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to amend the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 with respect to waiting lists for child care / Projet de loi 199, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance à l'égard des listes d'attente pour les services de garde.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Arthur Potts: The Child Care and Early Years Amendment Act, if passed, would amend the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, with respect to waiting lists for child care. A new section, 14.1, would prohibit licensees and child care providers from establishing or maintaining child care waiting lists other than in accordance with that section. Licensees and child care providers are also prohibited from charging or accepting fees or deposits in respect of a child care waiting list.

PETITIONS

PROMPT PAYMENT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition signed by hundreds of people entitled "Support Prompt Payment Legislation in Ontario." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas delayed payments are a harmful practice in Ontario's construction industry;

"Whereas Ontario's trade contractors incur significant costs when payments are delayed from general contractors;

"Whereas cash flow risks have forced many contractors out of business and discouraged others from investing in capital or hiring new workers;

"Whereas payment delays have led trade contractors to hiring fewer apprentices, which will lead to fewer qualified tradespeople in the future;

"Whereas prompt payment legislation offers government the opportunity to provide stimulus to the economy without spending a dime;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Ontario Legislature to support Ontario's construction industry by adopting prompt payment legislation as a means to address the payment delay issues in Ontario."

I'm happy to support this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have thousands of names on a petition for gas prices. I want to thank Mr. A.L. Dubord from Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Leah to bring it to the Clerk.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait un plaisir d'apporter à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario cette pétition.

« Attendu qu'il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l'Ontario;

« Attendu que d'offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu'à préserver l'environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d'Orléans et de l'est d'Ottawa ont besoin d'une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l'Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l'est d'Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Il me fait un plaisir d'inscrire mon nom et de la remettre au page Brendan.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 152, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2015 is a vital tool that supports Ontario’s auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

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“Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

“Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 152 into law, to promote Ontario’s auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money.”

CAREGIVERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by many residents of London West. It was gathered by my constituent Rachel Buttigieg. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

“Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

“Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

“Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas’s bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario.”

I totally support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Leah to take to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly about Ontario fluoridation legislation.

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

“Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation

Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

I agree, affix my name to it and will have it delivered by page Alfred.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I support this, affix my name and send it with page Laura.

SPEED LIMITS

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas driving at a high rate of speed has contributed to many fatal snowmobile accidents on lakes and rivers across Ontario; and

“Whereas the safety of individuals is put at risk when snowmobiles are driven at a high rate of speed on lakes,

rivers and within close proximity to people, ice huts and other vehicles;...

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(a) No person shall drive a motorized vehicle at a greater rate of speed than,

“(i) 20 km per hour within 200 feet of any person, ice hut or other vehicles

“(ii) 80 km per hour on frozen waterways....”

I'd like to submit this petition and give it to page Preston.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I also have a petition on Ontario water fluoridation legislation. I'd like to thank Meadowvale dentist Sanjukta Mohanta for having sent me so many signed petitions from my own community. It reads as follows:

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

“Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Benjamin.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman's damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Brendan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Laura to deliver.

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the government's policy involving third parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

“Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

“Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

“Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

“Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNRF’s publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

“Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner.”

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I fully support it and will affix my name and send it with page Claire.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to read this petition for the first time in the Legislature.

“Whereas for six years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) listened to thousands of former students of residential schools and their families testify to the devastating legacy of this national policy of assimilation;

“Whereas the TRC calls upon ‘the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, aboriginal peoples and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties and aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to grade 12 students’ (CA 62.1);

“Whereas on July 15, 2015, Canada’s Premiers indicated their support for all 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and said they would act on them in their own provinces and territories;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario urge the government of Ontario to fully implement such a curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give this to page Aadil.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to present this petition that’s addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Marthangi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L’ATTÉNUATION DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 12, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill in this Legislature, the member for Nickel Belt had the floor. I'm assuming she wants to continue.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. You'll have to forgive me if I do a little bit of a recap, because it could be that over this busy weekend we just had, a few people forgot where I was at. So I will recap and then continue.

Basically, the goal of the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, Bill 172, is to create a cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gases and to protect the environment, to help Ontarians transition to a low-carbon economy, and to coordinate such actions with other jurisdictions.

Let's be clear: New Democrats support cap-and-trade, but we also support a system that is fair, that is effective and that is transparent.

Some of the ideas that I will put forward are really to put forward some constructive ideas as to how we can make this bill better than what it is now.

You all know that I represent a jurisdiction in northern Ontario. Every day or so, I stand in the House, like I did a few minutes ago, and read into the record petitions sent to me by hundreds and sometimes thousands of names. Every week, when I go back to my constituency, I go to the office and there will be another pile of petitions that all say the same thing: "We are being gouged at the pumps in northern Ontario." We are paying a price discrepancy between other areas of the north, in Sudbury and Nickel Belt, which I represent, and it boggles the mind. It is impossible to justify that bringing gas to Sturgeon Falls is 20 cents a litre cheaper than bringing gas to Sudbury. It makes no sense.

When we see things that say we will add over four cents in tax on to the price of gas, this has severe repercussions for the people I represent. In most of my riding, there is no public transit. If there was public transit—and in some parts of riding, there is. In Val Caron and Hanmer, there is a little bit of public transit. People use the public transit. There are such great distances that if you can get from Hanmer to downtown for \$3, the price of a bus ticket rather than the price of gas, it is worth it and people use it. But in most of my riding, this is not an option that is available. The only option available is to drive your car.

So, when we see a tax on gas in areas of the province where you have no other option, it is hitting people in the pocketbook. It is hitting people who already have a hard time making ends meet. This is not fair, and this is something that people are really opposed to. I can show you stacks of petitions. Although I'm not allowed to use props, I can show you stacks of petitions. Every week, I get the same thing. They come from all over my riding, and they are angry about the price of gas.

Now we have a program of the government that will further increase the price of gas in areas of the province that have no choice. Don't get me wrong; people in the

north support a green economy. People in the north want to make sure that we have a healthy environment and that we protect our environment, just like every other place in Ontario, but they don't want to be the ones who pay for somebody else to enjoy, and this is the path we seem to be going down.

The other complaint I receive the most often is about the price of electricity. My riding was one of the lucky ones where the smart meter—I have a hard time calling them "smart," Speaker, and you'll understand why. They did not work. For months that turned into years, a lot of people—hundreds of people—in my riding got hydro bills that made no sense. A hydro bill for a camp that has burned down—it does not exist anymore—and you get a \$300-a-month hydro bill. How can that be? The camp is gone, yet the meter still reads and still sends reports.

We had this couple from Hanmer in my riding—a \$2,000 hydro bill for a camp where the breaker has been turned off for the winter. How could that be? Well, I'll thank the previous Ombudsman for the great work he did. He did receive over 100 complaints from my riding as to how poorly those smart meters were performing in Nickel Belt. Now they have been taken down. We still have smart meters attached to our houses, but they're not being used; they're not being read. They can send the information they want. This is not how we get billed anymore. But a lot of people went through a lot of hardship before we got there.

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I'm putting that forward because you have to take into account the ever-increasing cost of electricity. When you're talking about a low-carbon economy and you say "no more fossil fuels," we all get this. At the same time, you have to realize that when hydro doesn't work, then we back up.

The last thing I want to put on the record—because I see my time is almost gone—is Mattagami. Mattagami First Nation has put forward a request for a small generating project. The request for proposal came out that they wanted 200 megawatts of renewable energy, and 75 would be into hydro, run-of-the-river. They put forward a request, a good proposal, in collaboration with OPG, and it got turned down. It got turned down because they say there was no room on the grid to carry their little project of 7.5 megawatts, I think it was. How could that be?

Mattagami is at the end of the line. They have power failures all the time. I've read into the record before weeks after weeks of power failures. Yet, when they put forward a solid project that would bring them run-of-the-river so that there would be increased power on the grid, they are told that there's no room on the grid. Why? Because some portion of the grid has been promised to a developer down south, when nobody knows who that is and we know full well they will never come to Mattagami.

There is something wrong. Let the people of the north have their fair share. Treat us like you would like to be treated. Then there would be a whole lot more support for Bill 172.

I thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate your patience with me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak about Bill 172. I believe it's important that we know what the proceeds from cap-and-trade are going to be used for. This is a very important part of the bill.

This bill sets out the types of initiatives that may be funded from the greenhouse gas reduction account established from cap-and-trade proceeds. Initiatives must be reasonably likely to reduce or support the reduction of greenhouse gases to be eligible to be funded from the greenhouse gas reduction account. Eligible initiatives include those relating to energy use, land use and buildings, infrastructure, transportation, industry, agriculture and forestry, waste management, education and training, and research and innovation.

This bill ensures transparency with respect to the use of the proceeds from cap-and-trade by requiring the preparation of a public report every year on funds flowing into and out of the GGRA and a description of the initiatives funded as a result, including their relationship to the climate change action plan.

I know that one of the biggest offenders in regard to greenhouse gases are large buildings. Hopefully, money from cap-and-trade can be used towards retrofitting those buildings and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from those buildings. That's a big initiative.

We also heard about trying to help people in small, rural communities so that they are reducing their greenhouse gas emissions as well.

I fully support Bill 172.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll be talking about this in much more detail later this afternoon, but I just want to bring up a few points.

This is one of those things where, at the end of the day, there are going to be higher costs for natural gas, gasoline, diesel and propane at a time when people in my riding are telling me that their hydro costs are already the biggest challenge that they are facing. Many people just can't do that. They can't afford any more changes, so we're very concerned.

And I'm doubly concerned when someone by the name of Greg Sorbara, a former Liberal finance minister, suggests that this is a cash grab in the name of the environment, plain and simple. He suggests that this is nothing more than a new tax to generate money for the government.

I'm going to quote him. I'm quoting Greg Sorbara, former Liberal finance minister: "There's no evidence, anywhere in the world that ... cap-and-trade ... actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions."

So at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly concerned. We want to make sure that we do the right thing. But here, again, is someone who has been within that party suggesting that it doesn't work.

He continued: "Until I see that evidence ... I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme, other than it's going to bring a lot of new money into the government."

He goes on to say at another time—again, this is Liberal Finance Minister Greg Sorbara, in a former government here; he highlighted this very concern when he said, "Cap-and-trade requires a very significant bureaucracy. And this government has a very large bureaucracy. The last thing it needs is to add hundreds of people to the offices around Queen's Park to deal with cap-and-trade."

Another point that's been made in the debate is that there is a lot of cap-and-trade fraud in many of the countries where this has been introduced. It makes me very nervous that that could happen. Again, at the end of the day, we all need to focus on programs and services that are truly going to move the needle: things that are going to make a difference to climate change, to our environment and to the health of the Ontarians who are going to be paying these bills.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I'm going to talk for 20 minutes later this afternoon. I'll bring up a lot of points. I certainly welcome the opportunity to debate this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to my colleague the member from Nickel Belt. I always appreciate her comments in this House, because more often than not she focuses on the residents of her area, who are much the same as the residents of my area; we're neighbouring.

I don't think anybody in northern Ontario doesn't want to help fight climate change, but there are certain things in northern Ontario that aren't faced by the people who I think authored this bill. The simple fact of raising the cost of things to force people to stop using them is a fine idea if you have alternatives. But simply raising the cost of fossil fuels to force people to use the alternative when there is no alternative is very difficult. That's something that the member from Nickel Belt focused on.

The member from Barrie had some nice remarks about how great this bill was going to work. She had a nice quote: that it was "reasonably likely" going to result in something. Well, this is called questions and comments, and I have a question for the government: How are people in northern Ontario reasonably likely going to pay the bills caused by this when there is no alternative? There is no public transit. We had daily bus service; that was cut. We had daily train service in northeastern Ontario, and guess what? That was cut. We have people now who can't afford the hydro to heat their homes, and this government comes out, "Well, we're going to have to heat everything with hydro." We are looking desperately to find other means to get out of using hydro to heat our homes, because we can't afford it, and yet this government says, "Use more hydro."

Again, that doesn't reflect what people in our part of the world are actually feeling. That's a huge, huge issue. The people in northern Ontario are reasonably likely going to get hurt very badly by this scheme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak to the member from Nickel Belt's comments on Bill 172. It's a little disappointing to hear the members of the opposition and the third party decry the legislation because of a lack of options. We heard the same argument from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Let us be a little bit more wide-thinking about opportunities. Yes, gas will go up for the automobiles, and you may not be able to take public transit, but guess what? There will be a dedicated fund, estimated to be \$1.9 billion, which we can invest in your local homes, we can invest in infrastructure in your communities, we can invest in transmission lines, so that the First Nations in Mattagami will actually have an opportunity to get off diesel. Because one of the greatest climate change initiatives we will get out of the north is that if we take community after community from diesel—which is a fossil fuel. I would like to remind the members that diesel fuel is a fossil fuel, and the objective here is to get out of the fossil fuel business and get into the electricity business.

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I know that First Nations across Ontario in remote communities want us to have a dedicated fund which will allow us to get transmission into their community and get them off very, very expensive hydro. That's what this bill will do.

If you took the members from the opposition's point of view, where you had a tax-and-dividend scheme, the member from Nickel Belt's constituents would be spending more for gasoline and we'd just give them a cheque back. If I use their argument, they would do nothing with that cheque because there are no options. What we're saying is, there will be a dedicated fund, we will give them options and maybe an option will be that we could get all the guides and your remote fishing communities on four-stroke engines because the climate change benefit of being on a four-stroke outboard as opposed to a two-stroke is an incredibly important direction, or maybe some of those 4 by 4 F-150s—let's start developing pickup trucks that are hybrids so that we can use gas more efficiently.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Nickel Belt can now reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I had a reply, but I have to say something to the member from Beaches-East York. I don't know the last time you shopped for pickup trucks, but those already exist. There's already a hybrid pickup, and there's already a pickup that goes from four to six to eight.

Mr. John Vanthof: And four-strokes as well.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And four-strokes as well.

Let's go back to the bill. I want to thank the members from Barrie, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Timiskaming-Cochrane for their comments. At the end of the

day, I still want to focus on—you have to realize that the people in the north feel like they're not being treated fairly. When I come back to Mattagami, Chief Naveau called me to say, "They came out, they asked for a proposal, we answered with a small proposal," and then they were told no, that they have to save room on the grid for some foreign investor who may or may not—let's face it, Speaker: Nobody will come to Mattagami to do a run-of-the-river project. Run-of-the-river hydroelectricity, the cleanest, greenest, cheapest, most renewable form of energy—they want it. They have the river to do this. They had put forward a proposal and then they're turned down: "There's not enough room on the grid." This is an insult.

Not enough room on the grid? There's not enough power making its way to Mattagami to support the people there. They get brownouts and complete power failures all the time. They put forward something that is right in line with the green economy and with this bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and then they get turned down. Somebody from down south needs to have access to the grid at some point.

This is insulting, Speaker. This doesn't move people forward, and it further polarizes northern Ontario as the one who will be paying for this but not getting any benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa-Orléans and the member for Sudbury.

I just want to offer some comments about the targets of the bill. What is the fundamental premise of the bill? The fundamental premise is that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is vital to fighting climate change. That's the bottom line.

Ontario has set targets for reductions to greenhouse gas emissions relative to our 1990 levels. We have committed to a 15% reduction by the year 2020, a 37% reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050. What this act is going to do is it's going to enshrine those targets in legislation so that they're just not things that we're talking about or speculating about; it's things that we're going to do by virtue of legislative authority.

Another key element of the bill is the development of a climate change action plan. The bill requires the government to prepare a plan detailing the actions that it's going to take that will enable Ontario to meet our emission reduction targets—the ones that I've just set out.

We have worked with our New Democrat colleagues to strengthen the government's accountability in reporting our progress under that action plan. My thanks to the third party for that.

Amendments were made in committee, after hearing from the third party, to require that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change publish a progress report every year rather than at least every five years.

That's very, very important because we want to stay on top of this file, we want to stay on top of those targets, to manage the targets.

A third element of Bill 172 is the cap-and-trade provisions. The bill now before the Legislature provides a strong foundation for Ontario's cap-and-trade program and establishes the framework for its implementation.

I want to say a few words about transparency and accountability because that is very important in the massive piece of legislative change that is contemplated in this bill. The government has included a number of other elements in the proposed legislation to ensure transparency and accountability. The bill would require an annual report on the funds credited and charged to the greenhouse gas reduction account as well as a description of initiatives for which the funds were used. It would require government to publish reports on the use of cap-and-trade proceeds, which will be invested in the various initiatives that reduce or support the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Under the proposed legislation, before any amounts are paid in respect of any initiative, the minister is required—required—to review the initiative and provide an evaluation of that initiative to Treasury Board. As you all know, appearing before Treasury Board is a very vigorous exercise. In his or her review, the minister must consider a number of things: the potential emissions reduction of the initiative; how the initiative relates to achieving the province's greenhouse gas reduction targets; how the initiative relates to other potential planned or funded initiatives; and how the initiative relates to the climate change action plan.

The bill, as amended in committee, also now includes a requirement for the minister's review to consider whether the initiative is also likely to assist low-income households and vulnerable communities with their transition to a low-carbon economy. In summary, this government recognizes the disproportionate impact that carbon pricing can have on low-income households and supports the steps that we are going to take to transition them to a low-carbon economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to let my colleagues now pick up the debate from here, but just let me conclude. This is a transformative piece of legislation, and that's why my comments about transparency and accountability are so important, and why those elements of the bill are so important to the successful implementation of this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would say that it's always a pleasure to rise and speak in this House, and particularly on Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016. I know my colleagues will be sharing a little bit their thoughts on how good this bill is, but I just want to bring maybe a different perspective today. Most of us in this House—and I say “most of us”—understand that the climate is changing and that the actions we take today will impact our children and certainly our grandchildren. The actions

we are taking and putting forward in this House are to address the changing climate. We see greater variation in what were normal weather patterns. We've seen an increase in tornadoes, in the destruction they can bring, such as the tornado that brought destruction to Goderich in 2011.

All of us in this House should know by now that it is well established that climate change is happening and it is man-made. I hope that all of us can agree on this fact. In particular, I hope that the PCs have truly come around to the fact that climate change is a reality and we must start to mitigate its harmful effects now.

I was present at their convention a few months ago in Ottawa, when their leader curiously stated that he believes in a carbon tax. That was quite interesting, that he decided the environment was something that indeed needs protection. It's interesting, given his presence in a federal government that cut back on protecting our environment; that rolled back protection for our lakes and our rivers; a government that turned off the federal funding for the Experimental Lakes Area.

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Where was their leader then? He was complicit in part of the reduction of environmental protection and the muzzling of scientists. And where has his caucus been on this issue? Many of them had petitions on their websites that sought to block Bill 172 even after their leader announced the party would support a carbon tax. They even updated their logo, which has questionable aesthetics, but to highlight that they are committed to the environment, they included a leaf of some sort in their logo.

All this smoke and mirrors on their part is to hide the fact that their newfound change of heart is to hide their leader's previous record on the environment as a Harper backbencher. While the environment should be a non-partisan issue, their conversion on the way to Damascus seems to be more painted in politics than principles.

So, while I do hope some of my colleagues on the other side of the House truly have embraced a new attitude on protecting the environment and supporting this bill, I remain skeptical about their newfound ideals past the next election.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the official opposition members to please come to order.

The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It truly is my pleasure to be able to rise to speak to Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas.

If you'll bear with me, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use a little bit of an analogy. If we were all running towards a wall that was dead ahead of us, and you were running at it full speed, when do you slow down and change directions? Is it at one metre before? Is it 10 metres before; 100 metres before? Is it when you were a few kilometres back and you had people telling you, “Don't worry, the wall is just a mirage. Keep running; it's okay. Everything stays the same. Just keep running”? When do you actually veer off?

There's a phrase in the English language, and I think it's the most dangerous phrase in the English language: "We've always done it this way." Well, if we've always done it this way and we keep running towards that wall without veering off, what's going to happen? Keep our fingers crossed and hope that it's a mirage?

At some point, we have to recognize that we have to veer off. We have to change what we're doing. We have to realize that our current path towards the wall is going to end up with one thing, and that's not what we want.

Bill 172 is allowing us to veer off from running towards that wall because none of us want to hit that wall. I don't think anyone in this Legislature wants to hit that wall.

But it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, to hear from the opposition earlier talking about higher costs. I recognize that everyone is concerned about higher costs. We have plans in place to mitigate those costs: a \$325-million Green Investment Fund just to start. But those higher costs were all they could talk about. They didn't talk about higher temperatures and how that will have an effect. We see those effects happening right now in my own riding of Sudbury: floods in Sudbury. We could go to Toronto. Right across our great country, climate change is having an effect now.

Are we still running towards that wall, knowing? Are we not veering? Do we not want to make that change?

That's what this bill is doing. It is allowing us to start with the veering away so we can ensure that our children and our children's children, and I think if we look—we've been talking a lot about First Nations: seven generations. They can look back and say, "This is when we made the change. This is when we veered." And that is so important. It is so important for us to be able to do that, because what we're doing with this bill—I think there are two pieces that are key to recognize. We want to have reduction targets and action plans, and the cap-and-trade program will be using the proceeds to help both one and two.

So if we're looking at our emission reduction targets and action plans, this bill—establish in a statute the government's existing greenhouse gas emission reduction targets: 15% below 1990 levels by 2020, 37% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. We want to establish a framework for reviewing and increasing targets, as well as for the establishment of additional interim targets.

So yes, those are some lofty goals that we need to accomplish, but they are important goals. If we don't start trying to achieve some type of reduction and some type of target, what's to say, then, that we just go and pick a number out of the air? Fortunately, we can actually see in the air now because we don't have smog days anymore in Ontario. What was it? In 2014 was the last time we had smog days in Ontario. As a former asthmatic, I think that's something that we should all be proud of, and for all people who want to be able to breathe our air and drink our water, what we're doing as a government I think is important.

It's also important to recognize that this government is preparing this climate change action plan to enable the people of Ontario to achieve our targets and announce progress reports annually—sorry, not annually, but every five years. I think that's important too, to recognize that while we're reducing, we're also going to be monitoring to make sure that every five years—that if this is what our goal is supposed to be; as I said before, 15% below 1990 levels by 2020, 37% by 2030—we need to have targets, and that's what we're talking about.

If we're looking at some of the provisions when it comes to cap-and-trade and the use of those proceeds, this bill addresses, as I said, the emissions calculations; the reporting and verification; the requirements to submit allowances and credits to match the GHG emissions; registration of mandatory, voluntary and market participants; the creation and distribution of allowances and credits; the establishment of an offset program—and that's important for those of us in the north—trading; fees; and market operations and oversight, including provisions for a strong compliance and enforcement regime. Those are key.

But when you're looking at the initiatives that are set out in this bill that may be funded from the greenhouse gas reduction account that's going to be established from cap-and-trade proceeds, Mr. Speaker—please indulge me as I talk about this list—eligible initiatives, including those relating to energy use—again, if we go back to my initial analogy, if we're still running towards that wall, ways that we can help veer off is looking at using the proceeds from this fund, from the cap-and-trade fund, from the Green Investment Fund and from the \$1.9 billion that's going to be there for energy use.

Land use and buildings: I think that's something those of us in the north really need to talk about. We have many buildings where their windows need to be replaced, you're still on electric heat, and now we're going to have incentives to go geothermal and many other programs. Those are the types of things that we'll be able to invest in—

Interjections.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I know they don't like hearing the important facts, Mr. Speaker, but I'm more than happy to keep talking. Thank you.

These are things that we can continue to invest in. This Green Investment Fund is \$325 million. It is huge for us in the north, because we know that we're going to have avenues that we can actually start renovating our homes and those types of things. Land use and buildings is one of those things that we can actually use these dollars for.

Infrastructure: We often hear the words "resilient infrastructure." As I talked in the opening of my speech, I said we had flooding in Sudbury. Part of that relates to not having the necessary infrastructure in place to deal with these 100-year storms that are not just happening every 100 years; they're now happening every few years, unfortunately. So what we need to do is start investing in our infrastructure, helping our municipalities deal with

these frequent storms. That's something I know that we, as a government, have recognized and have made sure that we will allow our municipalities to invest in.

Transportation is another key one; transportation and public transit, especially in the north. I know we've heard from opposition members that the public transit system isn't always as readily available, but that's something that we can start looking at and working with municipalities and making it available. Rather than always saying, "No, no, no" and keep running towards that wall, Mr. Speaker, you start having the conversations. That's what we're doing with this.

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Industry: I've spoken with mining. I've spoken with the forestry sector. I've spoken with the steel sector. All of them understand that we need to do something and all of them recognize that we need to have a dialogue. They're all doing what they can, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and proud to be able to come from a mining community that just this past week had a session on what they called the Sudbury Protocol. The Sudbury Protocol is looking at the regreening efforts that Sudbury has made since the 1970s: over 12 million trees have been planted. Hopefully I got that number correct; otherwise, my constituents will be calling me and letting me know. But 12 million trees have been.

We can now drink from 330 lakes. Back in my day and back in the 1970s, we had 90 of those 330 lakes within our city boundaries that were dead lakes. We've regreened. We're growing. We're making sure that we're investing. I'm very proud to come from a mining community that actually recognizes the importance of being green, Mr. Speaker.

Agriculture and forestry is something that we've also been working diligently with. I know the Minister of Agriculture has been working with farmers. The forestry sector: I'm meeting with them a little later today. They're actually very interested in the offset piece—again, inside Bill 172—and I know many of these amendments were also brought forward by the opposition and were taken and put into this.

Waste management: Education and training is another piece that I think is important, Mr. Speaker. I know my time is getting close to running out, but education and training is so key to make sure that—as I said in my analogy, we're all running towards this wall. I said "you" initially, Mr. Speaker. Not you running, but in terms of the analogy. But we're all running. Every single person in this province is running towards that wall. How we decide as a society and as a government to veer off and change, to make those necessary changes, to ensure that we actually mitigate the current climate change that we're seeing and do our best to adapt—I think education and training are key.

Research and innovation: That is so fundamental to cap-and-trade and the program that we're now going to be involved with with Quebec and California. Because now we're going to be part of the leadership that's making sure that we have innovation, that we have

research available to ensure that—coming from a mining community, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use this—the next best CO₂ scrubber that can be put in a smelter to make sure that the CO₂ that is coming out of the smokestacks that Sudbury is so well known for—that we have the next CO₂ scrubber that's there to help them reduce their CO₂ emissions even more.

I'm very, very pleased to be able to stand here today to talk about an amended bill that is doing the right thing to really stop us running towards that wall, veering off when we're supposed to, to make sure that our province is doing what we can to ensure that we're living in a better, cleaner, safer world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to start off by saying I was listening to all the speakers on this issue, but we'll go from back to forward. The member from Sudbury was speaking about the people of Ontario running, and he was speaking of a wall. But the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, are running, and they're trying to get a handle on their expenses because the government keeps making it more expensive to live in this province, and their pay is not going up to meet it. Obviously, they're running. I think the real problem we have is that every time they get closer to being able to make ends meet, the government sticks their foot out and trips them again. This bill is one of those trips again that, in fact, is going to make it more and more difficult for them to live and to make ends meet.

The first speaker was speaking about an action plan. As I listened to the member from Beaches–East York, he was talking about that action plan and how we're going to get out of fossil fuel use in this province and we're all going to go all to electricity. Most of my people can't afford the electricity they have to buy now. I think them all going to electricity just isn't feasible, and, again, another foot is coming out. As people are trying to make ends meet, another government foot is tripping them up.

Then we hear another one that says, the member for Beaches–East York—oh, no, that's the one that was out of fossil fuel.

We heard speaking about the buildings in Sudbury need new windows, and they're still on electricity. Now, how does that fit with this plan that the government is doing? We're going to put them all on electricity, but in Sudbury they want to close down the electric-heated homes and go—I would presume—to a fossil fuel to heat them up so we can be able to pay the bills to heat our homes, because presently, going with hydro, as the member suggested—it's far too expensive to heat those homes with hydro.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, I think the people of Ontario are running. They're running behind everything that this government is proposing and their economics are behind. They're not making life more affordable for Ontarians, Speaker; it becomes harder and harder to

make ends meet with the way this government is running this province, and that takes me to the part talking about the finance piece that this government wants to propose.

They want to create a Green Investment Fund. People have questions around that, because in Quebec, they also had that green investment fund, and it wasn't working like it was supposed to. We're not sure that that money will actually be dedicated to the cap-and-trade, to this environment piece.

We saw it when there were changes to the Trillium Fund. They were supposed to be dedicated last December. They dismantled the Trillium Fund as a special-purpose account dedicated to infrastructure. When the government talks about setting up another fund, people have concerns that this money will be used for that purpose, and rightfully so.

Even this morning, the Minister of Energy talked about the income revenue that was generated. It was, I think I heard, around \$300 million. I have to check the figures; I was trying to find it on Hansard, but I haven't been able to verify. Our critic for energy questioned that income revenue from the energy file and said, "No, if that's the amount you've generated, you've actually spent \$1.9 billion just to actually make this income of \$300 million." So playing with the numbers is a big concern.

This green energy fund that the Liberals say that they are going to set up—we have extreme questions and wonder if they are going to use it for the purpose that it's intended.

I do want to say that I'm glad that the energy minister is going to be reporting once a year, because I think it's important that we watch this very closely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, when it comes to climate change, you either believe that it's real or you don't. Now, on this side of the House, we accept the science. We accept the overwhelming weight of evidence. We believe that it's real. On the opposition side, it seems that one opposition party sort of whispers that perhaps they might accept that this is real, but then act as if it isn't. So you either believe that it's real or it's not.

If you believe that climate change is for real, then you're willing to do something about it or you're not. On the other side of the House, both opposition parties don't appear to be willing to do anything about it. But if you believe that it's real, you've got to be willing to do something about it.

The proposal that the province of Ontario has set out is very much in line with the leading jurisdictions in North America, of which we are one of three. The others are California and Quebec. We are willing to do something about climate change.

If you believe that it's real and you are willing to do something about it, then you're either going to get on with it or you aren't. The difference between those of us in government and those of us in opposition is that we have decided that we're going to get on with it. We

believe that climate change is real. We have a plan. We're willing to do something about it, and now the province is going to get on with it.

Speaker, one could say, "Well, can you predict with absolute accuracy what the future will hold?" You can no sooner do that in this field than you can in any other. But are we acting in a prudent, reasonable, planned and methodical fashion? I think that what this bill says is that yes, the province of Ontario has done everything that is reasonable and prudent and has a methodical, orderly approach to planning and mitigating climate change.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the comments from members on the other side of the House, the government side. They talk about science. It seems to me that science is only believed if it serves your purpose, and that's what we've certainly seen with this government on different issues. We can see that with what they've done to some segments of agriculture, with the neonics issue that we're facing in rural Ontario, with the corn and bean farmers.

It's interesting to me, when you read through the whole thing, you read through the budget bill and you read through this and that, that this is pretty much a fund for this government to pay for some of the projects they've got on the books. There's going to be a tremendous amount of money made by the government with this initiative. Certainly that is not hard to prove. I will be making my remarks a little bit later, and I will show you, Speaker, just exactly what this money is going to go for.

It's mostly because this government has run out of ways to raise money. Because of their spending habits in the past number of years, it's been difficult for them to get control of their deficits—in fact, they never have. Also, the debt they've accumulated over the last 13 years, I believe, of being in office speaks to their incompetence running the economy.

Climate change certainly is an issue that we have to face, but to do it in this way is nothing but a cash grab scheme that this government has come up with in order to tax the good people of Ontario and raise money because they can't manage their funds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can now reply. I recognize the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to reply and comment on the two minutes brought forward by my colleagues from the opposition and my government colleague as well.

The last comment—I'm sure the honourable member doesn't see anything to do with climate change as fun. We're having to do this because of decisions made in the past by societies in general. We need to actually fix our planet. We need to fix our planet for future generations, and this bill is actually doing that. It is giving us access to a Green Investment Fund to ensure that we can start mitigating that climate change, because the science is

clear. It isn't the science of this government; it's the scientists who have actually told us that if we don't do something now, there won't be a world for us to worry about in decades. There won't be a world for our families in the future.

As I always said, I respect the First Nations and what they say about planning for seven generations. We need to ensure that that's what we're doing here, and that's what this bill does: It allows us to be able to work with First Nations, work with municipalities, work with industry and work with families and households to make sure that we can actually address climate change.

There are going to be some costs associated with this, Mr. Speaker. No one denies that, and that's what we should be debating about: making sure that we're using our funds correctly. We're talking about that, but all we're hearing on the other side is nothing about the climate, nothing about the change. We want to ensure on this side of the House that those organizations, families and governments all have the resources necessary to bring forth the changes that we need to actually mitigate climate change as best we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure this afternoon to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas, which was introduced by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

We, the Progressive Conservatives, certainly see that climate change is an important issue that we have to deal with. The question is whether this plan the government has come up with, their very complicated cap-and-trade plan, is the right approach or not. Frankly, I would call it social engineering when you read articles which I will get to that were in the *Globe and Mail* today with some of the proposed changes the government wants to bring about.

In my recent trips around the north and as northern critic, I've got to tell you that there's a lot of uncertainty when you talk to businesses about what's going on with the cap-and-trade plan. In December, I, along with our leader, Patrick Brown, did a week-long road trip starting in North Bay and heading all the way up to Dryden and back. We made many stops along the way and had lots of discussion about various issues. It's interesting how often concern with the uncertainty with regard to cap-and-trade came up.

For example, we toured Hemlo gold mine and had a good look at that large open-pit mine at Hemlo. Their big concern was the uncertainty of what it was going to cost them for cap-and-trade. They can't change the price of gold. All they can do is manage their costs. They were guessing that it might cost, for that one mine, about \$3 million a year. That extra cost shortens the life of the mine. It can even lead to the shutting down of the mine.

We drove up, as I mentioned, to Dryden, stopped and toured Domtar there, which is a big pulp and paper plant. They were very concerned, stating that they have already done a lot of work to reduce their greenhouse gases. They

were concerned about whether that would be recognized and uncertain about what it would cost them, again. They were guessing millions of dollars. Of course, the forest sector is one that's very much in sync with the environment. I'll get to that in a few minutes. A pulp mill is very important for all the various forestry operations in a given general area, because it relies on lumber mills; it relies on chips. It's important to have a pulp and paper mill to have a successful forestry sector in a given geographic area, so a lot of concern there.

Just last week, I was up north in Timmins. I happened to run into some people from Goldcorp checking into the hotel, and the number one thing that came up was, they were actually looking at their energy costs and concerned with the uncertainty with regard to cap-and-trade and just what it was going to cost. They mentioned that they had been talking to deputy ministers, and assistant deputy ministers and even they don't have answers for them, which makes you really concerned, especially given the track record of this government when it comes to trying to plan things out and engineer things. You just need to look at other great schemes they've come up with. Whether you believe in what the goal is or not, you look at the Green Energy Act: Sure, it's a good idea to switch to more green energy, but look at the way this government did it.

We need to look at the Auditor General's report of 2015 where it points out that "electricity consumers have had to pay \$9.2 billion more ... for power from renewable electricity projects over the 20-year contract terms under the ministry's current guaranteed-price renewable program than they would have paid under the previous procurement program." To make that clear, that means you could have achieved the same result but saved \$9.2 billion. That money has all gone on to hydro bills around the province. They didn't accomplish anything more. They just spent an extra \$9.2 billion.

When it comes to this cap-and-trade program, it's about the way they are going about it, and do you trust this government with their various schemes they are coming up with?

We've heard from the environment minister in a report in the newspaper that he thinks we should not be using natural gas, that that's a bad thing. I tell you, if you visit the folks in Parry Sound-Muskoka—personally, I'd love to be able to heat my home with natural gas, because it's by far the most efficient way to heat your home. They want to switch everyone to pure electric. Well, in my riding, if you do that, people can't afford to heat their homes, especially with the huge increases, the 80% increases, we've seen in electricity bills. People won't be able to heat their homes.

My next question for the government would be: Are you going to outlaw wood heating as well? Because a lot of people in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka heat with wood, partly because they can't afford the electricity costs. You want to social-engineer them all on to only electricity. There are a lot of people in my riding that simply will not be able to afford to pay their bills with

that plan of yours. The idea of doing away with natural gas, something that lots of people would love to be on, just seems a little bit out there, shall I say.

1430

We heard the Minister of the Environment say last week that he wants to shut down nuclear in 10 years. Well, nuclear power, just in case he wasn't aware, is 60% of the electricity of the province of Ontario, and I would argue it's a clean energy that is not emitting greenhouse gases except in the construction phase of a nuclear plant. And yet, the Minister of the Environment wants to shut down 60% of the electricity generating, the baseload in this province. So he's switching everybody to pure electric, doing away with natural gas, but doing away with 60% of the generation that is clean, green generation.

You wonder why we're a little skeptical about this social engineering scheme you've come up with. Especially based on your past track record, I think it's fairly obvious. Again, with your other scheme, your Green Energy Act, the Auditor General's report was talking about how much extra consumers are paying:

"Given the current comparatively high prices that consumers pay for electricity in Ontario, it is especially critical that Ontario determine how it will meet its future electricity demand in the most cost-effective manner. Ontario's residential and small business electricity consumers have already had an 80% increase in the electricity portion of their bills, including global adjustment fees, between 2004 and 2014. In particular, global adjustment fees, which are the excess payments to generators over the market price, amounted to \$37 billion—that's a B; it's hard to get your head around—"from 2006 to 2014, and these payments are projected to cost electricity consumers another \$133 billion from 2015 to 2032."

The numbers are so big, it's hard to get your head around them. That's the Auditor General of Ontario, not me, that's coming up with these figures.

Last week up in Timmins, another gold mine that we toured wasn't big enough to qualify for the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, so they are faced with paying the global adjustment. They pointed out that the global adjustment was 50% of their electricity bill—50% of it—and that they were paying—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: I guess this government just doesn't care about whether they create any jobs in this province or whether people can afford to pay their electricity bills, based on the crazy schemes they're coming up with.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, in his speech—I believe it was at the Economic Club last week—stated that you shouldn't buy a car with an internal combustion engine; that you should only buy electric vehicles. That's so out of touch with the reality of rural and northern Ontario, where at least 50% of the people are driving pickup trucks, and that's the reality of what they need: You don't have public transit, so you have to rely on an automobile. And yet, in this fantasy world of

the Minister of the Environment, he's going to miraculously switch everyone to pure electric vehicles.

I would ask the Minister of the Environment or the government members what that means for the auto sector in Ontario, which is billions and billions of dollars, and thousands of jobs in Ontario. Have they thought that out? How many Teslas are made in Ontario? How many pure electric vehicles are made in Ontario? How many hybrids are made in Ontario?

I was thinking—I mean, I drive a hybrid. I drive a Ford Escape hybrid, which is a very good vehicle. I do it mainly to try to save some money on gas. I had a Ford Fusion hybrid prior to this vehicle, which I put a few hundred thousand kilometres on around Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I did ask the library, because I wasn't familiar with any electric or hybrid vehicles, which ones might be made in Ontario, seeing as we have a really important auto sector, in case the government members aren't aware of that. There's a few thousand jobs. Which ones are made in Ontario?

Well, I did find one. I'm sure it's a beautiful vehicle. I'm not slamming the vehicle at all; I bet it's a beautiful vehicle. The Lexus RX450h is made in Ontario, I think near Cambridge, starting at \$68,950, probably about \$80,000 when you get it nicely equipped. I'm sure it's an absolutely beautiful vehicle. I just don't know how many of my constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka are going to be able to afford that, even with the \$15,000 subsidy that you want to hand out.

The approach the government is taking—it's so complicated. I had a citizens' group come to me in the last year—I think it was called the Citizens' Climate Lobby—and I sat down with them. I was trying to understand the cap-and-trade system a bit. So I'm asking them questions about cap-and-trade. In the end, they said that what they would like to see is carbon pricing, an amount per tonne that could go up over time, and carbon pricing that is completely revenue-neutral so it doesn't hurt the economy.

That is an approach that has been taken by BC since 2009, I believe, and it hasn't hurt the economy. The economy has still grown. It has worked, and it's simple and it's transparent. This approach the government has come up with is so complicated, it's so open to manipulation and it's so open to fraud. And in other jurisdictions where we've had it, it hasn't worked. So that is the approach this government has come up with. It's just not a great approach.

So this citizens' lobby group wanted to have revenue-neutral carbon pricing, and what they were asking for was an actual cheque to go back to every citizen, so that a citizen would realize, "Okay, we're having to pay a bit more for whatever—for gas for my car—but I see I got this cheque back at the end of the year that is the refund." So whatever the government collects gets fully refunded to the citizens of the province. That achieves two things: The people recognize that it's not just a tax, and it doesn't hurt the economy. Very importantly, it doesn't hurt the economy. I think BC has shown that.

That's the approach the PC Party wants to bring in, slightly different—not necessarily a cheque coming back—and details still to come. But revenue-neutral is absolutely critical so that—in BC I know that for rural areas that absolutely depend on automobiles and where there's no other choice, they do have some sort of rebate for people in rural areas. They have corporate and personal income tax reductions so that every dime collected in the new tax is refunded to people and doesn't hurt the economy.

In this government's case, it's a brand new tax—billions and billions of dollars—and then they're going to come up with all these crazy schemes of how they're going to spend your money. I mean, they're talking about getting into retrofitting buildings. That's really, really expensive, to retrofit buildings. I happened to replace the windows in my home last year. I guess I was a year too early to do it because maybe, if you do it next year, you're going to get some subsidy that the government decides upon. Some people are going to get it; some people are not going to get it. It's all part of the social engineering that this government has come up with.

We just need to look, though, at their track record when they go and come up with these various schemes, their record of management, which has not been good. One of the other ideas they've come up with is electric charging stations for vehicles that, I guess, are going to be paid for out of the new tax, except that they couldn't find anybody in Ontario to build these electric charging stations, so we're going to hire Quebec Hydro to put in these electric charging stations. Now, there's a good idea: We'll send all this newly collected money to Quebec. That's a really bright idea.

Also, we're part of the Western Climate Initiative, and California has been doing this for a few years more than we have. So what's going to happen—an independent report came out last week—is that in Ontario we're going to have to spend money and send it to California. The estimate from the report that came out, I believe, was over \$300 million in the near future, rising to billions of dollars in a few years—so billions of dollars. I don't know; I guess I'd ask the government: Is that US dollars or Canadian dollars? We're going to be sending the money to California so they can make emission reductions or improve their situation, instead of spending the money here in Ontario, as is the PC plan: to keep all the money, not hurt the economy, spend the money in Ontario and not leave it up to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to come up with some crazy schemes that he tends to come up with.

I'm sure the natural gas industry sector in Ontario will be putting out some statements about what they think about your social engineering as you try to get people off of natural gas.

1440

I actually think it makes a lot of sense to switch vehicles that run on normal gas to propane and natural gas. I owned a truck once that I converted to propane—again, to save money, but also it's much cleaner than normal, regular automobile gas. But this government

seems to have decided that natural gas is bad now—I'm not quite sure why—and they think, according to their report, that ethanol and biodiesel are better than natural gas or propane. I'm not sure whether that's in fact correct.

As the critic for the north, one of the things they talk about is more public transit. Well, what has this government done in the north? They shut down the only passenger rail service that we have in northern Ontario. They shut down the passenger rail service that went right through my riding. I would say it wasn't being used that much, but I think it was more a sign of how badly the government was running it in that they weren't providing good service. They shut down the only public transit we have in northern Ontario, and now they've lessened the amount of bus service in northern Ontario.

I'm not exactly sure how you're supposed to get around in the north other than with an automobile, and at this stage in time, I don't think you'd make it on a pure electric vehicle. I'm just not quite sure whether the government has really thought through this at all.

When I was in Timmins this past week, another thing that came up—we had a round table with the chamber of commerce, and they brought up cap-and-trade, very concerned with the uncertainty and how little businesses in this province really know about it. As I mentioned already, I talked to a large gold company. They're talking to deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers, and they can't get answers from them—huge gold companies.

The chamber of commerce just this week said, "Please delay it for a year so you get it right, or have a better chance of getting it right." I would say, based on this government's track record, the idea of them actually getting it right is maybe dreaming. I kind of hope this is one of the government's stretch goals and that they aren't really going to do this plan, because it's so ripe for problems going forward.

I just want to close with the article in today's paper, in the Globe and Mail, where it talks about the social engineering: "The Ontario government will spend more than \$7 billion over four years on a sweeping climate change plan that will affect every aspect of life—from what people drive to how they heat their homes and workplaces—in a bid to slash the province's carbon footprint.

"Ontario will begin phasing out natural gas for heating, provide incentives to retrofit buildings and give rebates to drivers who buy electric vehicles. It will also require that gasoline sold in the province contain less carbon." They're going to switch everybody to geothermal systems.

I'm running out of time here, Mr. Speaker, but I would really like to know, for the many residents in my riding, as they go to new rules, switching everybody to pure electric—and I can say that in my riding, most people are trying to figure out how to get off electric because it's so expensive. I've been asked this by constituents recently: Are they going to ban wood stoves in the province of Ontario? Because in my riding, so many people—in fact, I heat my house with wood. I just finished cutting next

year's wood supply, as a matter of fact. Probably 50% of the population in rural Parry Sound–Muskoka heats their homes with wood, so I would like to know from the government: Is that part of their plan? Are they planning on banning heating with wood as well as with natural gas?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks to the speaker from Muskoka—

Interjection: Parry Sound.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Parry Sound. Thank you very much.

He talked about many things. He talked about the track record of this government, and that is something on the forefront of people's minds every day. He talked about the crazy schemes this government has come up with. One of them we've been sounding alarm bells on is selling off Hydro One. That is one of their more current schemes that is on people's minds today.

We don't understand why they would sell, without a mandate from the people, a public asset that we can show actually generates income.

He talks about electric cars, how there's only one being made in Ontario and how expensive that electric car is, and that the rebate the government would offer is still going to make that car unaffordable to many Ontarians.

That brings me to the point, Speaker, that when this bill was introduced—as New Democrats, we want assurances that this cap-and-trade system won't increase inequality and disproportionately burden low-income Ontarians who pay a far greater share of their incomes in fuel costs and gasoline, specifically in the north. We have northern members here who, time and time again, have debated that issue. The cost of energy and the cost of transportation in the north is disproportionate to other areas of Ontario. If we don't pay attention to the cap-and-trade, to this climate change bill and how that is going to adversely affect the cost of living for people in the north, it is a disservice to those constituents who are represented in this House.

I want to make sure that when this bill gets passed, there is a fair, effective and transparent way of dealing with people who have those higher costs, who have a burden paying for those services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I call for more questions and comments, I'm very pleased to welcome a former member to this chamber, Jean-Marc Lalonde, the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, whom we remember fondly from the 37th, 38th, and 39th Parliaments. Welcome, Jean-Marc.

Mr. Norm Miller: And hockey coach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): And hockey coach, too, yes.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Once again I'm delighted to have an opportunity to stand and comment on another member's comments on Bill 172.

I want to start by thanking the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He talked about owning hybrid vehicles. I think that's fantastic, because the member is showing with his pocketbook and with his actions that he has got at least one foot on the right side of this issue. I appreciate that very much, because if others in the north were to follow his example and more people were buying the hybrid vehicles, then there would be a greater incentive for more hybrid vehicles to be built in Ontario—and mark my words, it's coming.

But secondly, Speaker, we talked a lot about the implications that he suggests on jobs and the economy. Let's not forget that it's anticipated that the movement to a carbonless economy is in the \$7-trillion range. You can be a denier and take yourself out of this marketplace—when you think that in the technology economy, an upwards of about \$2-trillion economy—we are at the forefront in Ontario of taking a leadership role in the carbonless economy, and we're going to embrace that fully going forward.

We talked also about issues like biodiesel. Why is biodiesel better than natural gas? Understand that biodiesel can be made from renewable resources. You can take waste products, such as waste vegetable oil from restaurants, and turn it into a propulsion fuel, rather than letting it go into a landfill where it will create methane and create carbon dioxide.

I know this, Speaker, because I've said before in the House how my own car was an old Mercedes 300D that ran on vegetable oil from my restaurant. It allowed me to avoid having to use fossil fuel, a non-renewable resource.

Let's also be clear: By joining the Western Climate Initiative, we are sharing the economy across North America. We're not protectionist, as the member would want us to be, only allowing Ontario to spend money in Ontario on Ontario companies. We have a shared economy that doesn't know borders, and that's the way we need to be in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to get up and discuss the comments from the member from Parry Sound because he certainly gets it right and he brings up some of the gigantic holes in this government's policy.

What we really need to look at is an integrated plan that is realistic. He talks about how they jumped on the leading edge of the green energy plan. What does that cost us? We see that the party opposite is all over the place. Some of them are talking about getting on to electricity to heat their homes; others are being a little more realistic and saying that there are people who weren't able to get off electricity because of the cost. That cost is all about getting on to something before the sciences allowed you to make the conversion in a practical and sensible way.

1450

Getting into electric vehicles before the science gets there just means that either you won't be driving or getting around the province—and maybe the member from Beaches–East York doesn't realize this, but there

are no transit systems in the north and rural Ontario. We're lucky enough to get any money from this government to put roads in, which we don't—because there's no gas tax that goes back to help these rural municipalities if they don't have a transit system.

And again, integrated plans—on one hand, they're cancelling transit systems; on the other hand, they're talking about how they'll be able to enhance them with all this money they're taking.

Time after time, everything we hear from this government is conflicting. On one hand, we hear the government saying they've talked to the financial officer—except the Financial Accountability Officer comes back and says, “They never talked to me, and I don't agree with their plan.”

We're not allowed to use the word “misleading” here, but that's really what this is about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, you're not, and you're not allowed to imply. I'm going to have to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw. But I'm not sure how we can get across when actually—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You're out of time, too. Sorry.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a good opportunity to stand in this House. Today we're responding to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka on his comments on Bill 172. I listened intently to his remarks. I appreciated that his remarks weren't just written speaking notes. He actually talked about the people of northern Ontario, people I can relate to. A couple of his remarks really struck me.

We were having a conversation just before, and he had said how he had driven through my riding. Well, I drive through his riding on a weekly basis to get here. I used to be able to take the train, which was much more environmentally friendly. Guess what? This government cancelled the train. We used to be able to take a bus. The bus would stop in North Bay, and you'd have about 15 or 20 minutes to catch the bus to go to Toronto. Now you stop in North Bay at 2 o'clock in the morning, and you have to wait for a couple of hours, in the middle of winter, to catch the next bus. So they may as well have cancelled that, too. I'm fairly young, in the grand scheme of things, but I have seniors who have to go to medical appointments and, effectively, they can't use that bus in the middle of winter, in a cold bus station.

So there are two examples of how the government talks about, “Oh, we've got this big fund,” but that big fund always seems to dry up when you come to the meat-and-potatoes things that impact people in northern Ontario.

Another example is that the first \$100 million that was announced was to retrofit homes and stuff, but it was going to be administered by Enbridge and Union Gas. Now we find out that they don't really like Enbridge and Union Gas. Very few people in northern Ontario and rural Ontario heat with natural gas, so that fund was not available to them.

Again, what people see and what this government says don't match.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments, so the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka can reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Beaches–East York, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

I had hoped, in my time, to be able to talk a bit about the forestry sector, other than talking about wood heat. I just wanted to say how important the forestry sector is to the environment in Ontario and get this one statement on the record: “In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained” climate change “mitigation benefit.” That was from IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007.

In northern Ontario, we have a huge forestry sector. I just hope this government recognizes how important that forestry sector is and that we need it to be healthy.

Interestingly enough, last week when I was up in Timmins and talking to one of the gold mines, they actually had a huge block of forest that they manage, and they're also hoping that that forest is taken into consideration when it comes to their cap-and-spend calculations.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to get on the record that the forestry sector is very important for the province of Ontario, and I hope it's taken into consideration in the considerations for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour for me to rise today to offer some thoughts on Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act on behalf of the people who I represent in London West.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, managing risks and adapting to climate change, and easing the transition to a low-carbon economy: These are, without question, some of the most important public policy questions that we debate as a Legislature here in this province, but they are critically important for the country and for all nations across the globe.

The consequences of not taking action on climate change are being felt, however, not just at the provincial, national, and global levels but also very directly, at the community level.

In my riding, in my community of London, there are a myriad of organizations that have formed to work on climate change. There are around 40 organizations that recently came together as the London Environmental Network. That network was created about a year ago. Almost half of the organizations involved in the network are involved in climate change issues. These range from climate action organizations like Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada London Group; Transition London On-

tario and Post-Carbon London, to renewable energy organizations like Green Energy London and London District Renewable Energy Co-Operative, and sustainable transportation organizations like London Cycle Link and London Electric Vehicle Association.

Municipal governments in London and across the province are taking steps to prepare for the impact of climate change. Citizens recognize that this is a high priority, and municipal governments are equally concerned.

In London, city staff worked with Western University researchers in 2011 to conduct a major study on the vulnerability of municipal infrastructure to climate change. That report, that came out five years ago, concluded that the city of London can expect to experience more frequent and severe precipitation events in the future, which will seriously impact various public infrastructure.

Just in the last two years, in London, we've seen several major floods that are not only putting pressure on public facilities, but are also dumping raw sewage into the Thames River. In June of last year, a massive one-day rainfall overwhelmed London's pollution control plants, leading to the dumping of almost 109,000 cubic metres of partially treated sewage into the river. Already, in the first three months of 2016, London has dumped almost 60,000 cubic metres of raw sewage and 91,000 cubic metres of partially treated sewage into the river, which is enough to fill about 60 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

The leakage of this waste into the river system has contributed to the explosive growth of algae blooms in Lake Erie, which is where the Thames River ultimately flows. It has created dead zones in the lake. It has killed fish and plant life. It's releasing toxins into the water supply, which my community and many other communities around the Great Lakes rely on, and is causing disruption to the entire ecosystem.

In 2014, the Middlesex London Health Unit conducted a study on the health effects of climate change at the local level, and the report that was released by the health unit was the first of its kind in Canada in terms of its focus on local impacts and on the health risks associated with climate change for London residents. Some of those risks that they identified included more smog-related diseases, increased heat-stress-related morbidity, and more rapid spread of vector-borne illnesses like West Nile virus and Lyme disease.

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In that report, the health unit also made a number of recommendations for the development of a climate change and health action plan, for extensive education and outreach throughout the community, for evaluation of existing adaptations that are designed to protect Londoners from climate-related hazards, for continued surveillance and monitoring of climate-sensitive diseases, for a greater understanding of the differences between urban and rural areas of our community in terms of the impact of climate change and, finally, to deal with the huge uncertainty that we all feel about what is going to happen and how to deal with this uncertainty by de-

veloping strategies and policies and programs that address multiple risks concurrently.

The adverse weather events that we have experienced in London—these floods not just in London, obviously, but across the province; the out-of-control wildfires that we have seen in northern Ontario and Alberta; the extreme heat waves—are not acts of God, Speaker. These are the direct result of human activity that has led to climate change. The reason we are having this debate before us today about this legislation is a recognition of the significant environmental, economic and political costs associated with climate change and the potentially devastating consequences if we don't take action.

That's why New Democrats have been so invested in this legislation that's before us today and why we have been so strong in our support for an effective cap-and-trade system. That's why my colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth, who I know is held in great esteem by members across the way, devoted so much effort to introducing amendments to improve this bill. New Democrats appreciate that some of the amendments that were brought forward by my colleague have been incorporated into Bill 172, and certainly that is a departure from what typically happens at committee, when all the amendments that are brought forward by the NDP are voted down. However, even the few amendments that the government accepted have not gone far enough in ensuring that this bill is going to do what we need it to do.

There is an urgency to take action. Climate change is real and the stakes of not taking the right action are high. We have already seen how the government's failure to listen to expert advice and to implement effective environmental actions has contributed to public cynicism and has undermined public commitment to advance environmental initiatives. We can't afford another green energy debacle that tainted the public's view of a green economy.

We need to get the most extensive buy-in possible. We need to engage all Ontarians in supporting and recognizing the need to take climate action. That's why New Democrats have been so insistent that the cap-and-trade system that is being put in place by this bill must be fair, it must be effective and it must be transparent. These are the same three principles that we talked about during second reading debate, these are the same three principles that underlie all of the amendments that were brought forward during the committee, and they are the same three principles that we still feel are lacking in this bill.

By "fairness," we mean legislation that will unite Ontarians, as I said before, behind a climate change initiative, rather than divide them. Certainly, when there is a feeling that some people are being asked to do more than their fair share and others are getting a free ride—when that kind of a feeling is in place—that can be very divisive. We have argued throughout the debate on this legislation that the cap-and-trade system must not place a disproportionate burden on low-income Ontarians, because that is not fair. Low-income Ontarians pay a much greater proportion of their income on home heating, on gas for their vehicles than the rest of us.

We have heard from this side of the House—from my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and my colleague the member for Nickel Belt—about the unique realities of people who live in northern communities across this province, whether they are low-income or not. They have very few options available to help them reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We've heard about the lack of public transit, the lack of train service from northern Ontario down to Toronto. Northern Ontarians don't have access to transit. They don't have any other choice but to use their cars to get around. This makes it very difficult for them to reduce carbon emissions, and they are going to end up carrying a disproportionate burden of the cost of a cap-and-trade system.

The same thing, closer to home for me in my community, goes for renters in apartment buildings. London West has a number of apartment buildings. The tenants, in many cases, don't control their own thermostat. They don't have the ability to reduce the amount of heat that they use. They don't have the ability to bring in energy efficiency retrofits. People like tenants, who tend to be low-income, will be disproportionately affected by this cap-and-trade system.

We urged, throughout the committee, that Ontario look at some of what is being done in other jurisdictions, which really is the norm for the implementation of a cap-and-trade system. BC provides a special rebate for low-income families. California requires that 25% of cap-and-trade revenues must be spent on programs that benefit disadvantaged communities. Alberta's new carbon tax plan includes a consumer rebate which will offset the impact of carbon pricing on low-income households. Throughout the consultation on this bill, as it was being drafted, throughout the public input that came forward during public input, a number of organizations reinforced this point: The burden has to be shared fairly, and low-income Ontarians should not be penalized by the way that the cap-and-trade system is designed.

During clause-by-clause, I know my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth introduced a series of amendments to do exactly that: to make the system more fair and to spread the burden more evenly. He moved that financial and investment assistance be made available to low- and middle-income residents. That amendment failed. He moved that the bill be amended to allow the provision of rebates or tax credits for low- and middle-income households. That amendment failed. He moved that the minister should identify communities that have a disproportionate burden. That amendment failed.

Finally, he was successful. He secured agreement from the government that the only wording that they would support is that the climate action plan “consider the impact of the regulatory scheme on low-income households and must include actions to assist those households with Ontario's transition to a low-carbon economy.” Certainly, that is a baby step forward. We would have liked to have seen stronger action, but it does address that issue of fairness that is so critical for New Democrats.

Another aspect of fairness concerns the support to enable workers who are engaged in high-carbon industries to transition away and move to other work. Again, my colleague had moved an amendment that there be assistance provided to people working in high-carbon industries to make a just transition, where their livelihoods are affected. Once again, that amendment was not supported.

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I want to talk a little bit about transparency, which is the second key principle, which is also, in our view, somewhat lacking in this bill. The government says that the \$1.9 million that's generated through cap-and-trade revenues will be dedicated to climate action; however, the greenhouse gas reduction account is not a separate, special-purpose account at all. It is actually an accounting procedure that allows the government to spend the money on anything it wants, including—potentially—deficit reduction. There's no guarantee that new cap-and-trade revenues will increase funding for climate change action, no commitment to record the inflows and outflows of money.

During the input on this bill, New Democrats listened. My colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth listened carefully to what the Financial Accountability Officer had to say about this bill. The FAO felt that it would be useful if the minister's review and evaluation that is provided for in the bill is structured in a way to maximize accessibility to the Financial Accountability Officer under the Financial Accountability Officer Act. For that reason, the NDP introduced multiple amendments to strengthen the cap-and-trade bill to include all of the FAO's recommendations to increase the transparency and accountability of the cap-and-trade system.

Unfortunately, again, Liberal members voted against these amendments. Not only that, but they claimed that the FAO's concerns had been incorporated into their bill. The FAO later said that he had been misrepresented in the way that his recommendations had been framed by the Liberal Party. He said, “In claiming that the reporting requirement was ‘what [I was] looking for,’ the member misrepresented my opinion and level of participation in the development of amendments to the bill. Furthermore, the member did not ask me whether the requirement was consistent with my recommendations.”

There are a number of other concerns about this bill related to transparency, and that is the lack of accountability over the programs that are going to be funded by the program fund that is created. We know that a number of people, including former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara, have raised concerns about the accountability and oversight over the dollars that are generated by the cap-and-trade system.

Finally, I want to move to the third principle, and that is effectiveness. Again, the NDP proposed a number of amendments that would have improved the effectiveness of this legislation in actually dealing with climate change. We've seen too many examples in other jurisdictions where carbon pricing initiatives and cap-and-trade pro-

grams have been introduced, and because of the way that they have been implemented, they have not actually succeeded in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Once again, my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth introduced a number of amendments that would have very much contributed to greater effectiveness for this legislation and would have made the bill much more effective in actually achieving the targets that are stated.

We know that dealing with climate change is important. We know that Ontarians want to see the government take action on this. We also know that they are a little bit jaded about the ability of the government to actually implement what it says it is going to do. So New Democrats will be continuing to monitor this legislation closely. We will be continuing to push for climate actions that are fair, that are transparent and that are effective, because, as I said at the outset, we can't afford to do anything less. Our province cannot afford for us to show any less leadership than that. We must deal with climate change; we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from London West for her comments. I was in here earlier, as well, when the official opposition was speaking on this bill, Bill 172, the climate change act.

I think it's another example of a piece of legislation that's before us where there is far more commonality than there is something that distinguishes us. I know that the third party and the member from London West just spoke. They obviously support something. I'm not exactly sure where they'll land on this. And we have heard, relatively recently, that the official opposition, the members of the Conservatives and their leader, have come out supporting, I guess it's fair to say, a carbon tax or a carbon pricing mechanism of some kind. We find ourselves in a position where all three parties are acknowledging that there is an issue, acknowledging that there is a problem, and they are somewhat trying to distinguish themselves in terms of what the approach should be. That is as it usually is in this particular Legislature.

I would say that there is a long history, actually, of agreement on this particular file. You can go back to the election of 2003, when all three parties of the day and all three political leaders of the day committed to the closure of all of the coal-fired generating facilities in the province of Ontario. Thirteen years ago, almost, or 14, when party platforms were being prepared, all three political parties and all three leaders of the day had made the same commitment to close coal. We did it. I know the file quite well. Two of the five coal-generating facilities were in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. We've moved forward and done that—the single biggest climate change initiative in North America.

I simply say that as the conversation on Bill 172 unfolds and continues, I would just remind visitors and viewers who are interested in this file that there's probably far more commonality on this issue than some might be led to believe as they follow the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to discuss, for a couple of minutes, Bill 172 and follow the member from London West, my neighbour down in southwestern Ontario.

I have to say, I've been in touch a number of times with my constituency offices today, and people are quite shocked. They consider the government's approach and the things that they're going to be doing to be quite unbelievable. Quite frankly, when I woke up this morning and read the *Globe and Mail*, I had the same reaction that my constituents in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex had to the fact that the government is planning to phase out natural gas for heating, provide incentives to retrofit buildings and give rebates to drivers who buy electric vehicles.

I just think there's a sense of disbelief. My perspective on this issue is that I think we have a government here that is completely out of touch with the way families in this province are trying to deal with day-to-day life and affordability.

There's grave concern, especially in southwestern Ontario, as the member from London West knows. I hope the NDP will advocate for the perspective of the auto industry in the province. We've been decimated in Ontario when it comes to manufacturing. Now we have a government that refuses to allow business and the free market to drive innovation and demand. This is a government and a Premier and a cabinet who are essentially telling the few remaining manufacturers in the auto industry that it's her way, this government's way, or the highway.

This plan is going to take thousands and thousands of dollars from families' pockets and it's going to kill jobs in this province, and I want that to be on the record.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again a pleasure to take a couple of minutes and comment on the comments on Bill 172 from my colleague from London West.

She captured the feeling in her community. A lot of people are mobilizing in her community to fight climate change because people across the province, people across the country, and likely many people across the world are worried about climate change and want to act. She also talked about issues that were happening in her community that could be and should be fixed right away, that aren't actually part of climate change but are just part of common sense.

She also talked about how, in the committee hearings, our critic put forward many amendments to this act, some of which were adopted, some of which were watered down, and some of which, quite frankly, were refused. He did everything he could; our party did everything it could to make this act—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Stronger.

Mr. John Vanthof: —work. Stronger.

The problem with not so much the act is, what happens after? Because we hear some of the radical issues or

radical things this government may or may not do. Quite frankly—and the member from London West talked about her riding; I'll talk about my riding. Quite frankly, some of the stuff that my people heard over the weekend coming from news articles which originated from briefing documents from this government—it scared people. It didn't make them want to help with climate change; it made them want to look for a foxhole. The way to address climate change is to bring people on board and make them work together; it's not to pit people against each other. That's what we saw in these briefing notes that came out this weekend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Etobicoke North.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. Avec votre permission, premièrement, je voudrais accueillir et souhaiter la bienvenue à notre ancien député à l'Assemblée législative de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, le très honorable Jean-Marc Lalonde. Bienvenue, notre ami.

I would first of all like to commend my honourable colleagues from the NDP not only for their active participation in the environmental sensitivity and sensibility initiatives and programs that we've had and are bringing forth here, but also for the fact that these are long-held views.

I would also like to congratulate the recently acquired interest by the Progressive Conservative Party, which is, I think, still struggling in a somewhat embryological form there—their support of greenhouse gas emission reduction. They're late to the environmental table, but, as they say, better late than never, and thank goodness the polls don't lie.

In any case, I would say that this entire initiative of greenhouse gas emissions has, of course, multiple effects, whether it's economic, social or political. With your permission, I will speak for a moment about the medical aspects.

We know and we can see by the clear examples, if you travel to other parts of the world, Beijing, Mumbai, Delhi, Karachi, Pakistan, and many, many other jurisdictions that do not take the reduction of greenhouse gas, particulate matter or carbon emissions seriously. This has a long-term, chronic, ongoing, devastating effect, not only for ordinary problems or simply-dealt-with problems like asthma or chronic obstructive lung disease, but of course for the downstream incidence, prevalence, of much nastier conditions, whether it's cancers—particularly, of course, lung cancer, but other cancers as well.

We need to pass this low-carbon emission bill as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I now return to the member for London West for her reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wanted to express appreciation to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member for Etobicoke North for offering some thoughts on my speech.

In particular, I wanted to pick up on what the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane said, my colleague in the NDP. He asked the right question. As is typical with much of the legislation that we see being passed by this government, for Ontarians, it's what happens after the act is passed. It's the implementation of the act that is most critical.

He points out that the most important thing, the thing that we cannot screw up on, is to bring people on board, to make everybody feel like they have a part in this climate action and that no one will be unfairly disadvantaged by the plans that the government is bringing forward.

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is right: We share constituents in southwestern Ontario. He is also quite right that there is a sense that this government is out of touch, that they have really dropped the ball on the energy file. There is no confidence that the government is going to be able to move forward in the way that we must on the climate change initiative. There is really a sense of disbelief that the government will be able to achieve what it sets out to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from London West. I call now for further debate. Further debate? The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, you have the floor now.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off by saying—and I think you might have said it when you weren't in the chair—that this newfound interest in the environment I think is a little bit misleading for some people. Former Premier Bill Davis was one of the greatest environmentalists—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I respectfully interrupt the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I'm sure you're aware of that vocabulary, and I'd respectfully ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll withdraw. My apologies, Speaker. You might have said something that I disagree with.

Former Premier Bill Davis, I think, brought in a lot of great environmental programs across this province. What we want to do today is set the tone. We actually agree that there are some climate concerns. Our new leader, Patrick Brown, has said that unequivocally. We just want to make sure we address the concern in a pragmatic way that will actually make a difference.

There's no time for this debate to be about social engineering, to be about photo op environmentalism. We need to do things that are going to make a true difference. Our leader has suggested that what we want to see is a revenue-neutral program so that we have the funds going towards the environment and we can ensure that.

We want to have balance between the environment and the economy. I'm not certain how the party opposite continually suggests that there is only one issue here, that the environment is the only thing that people are thinking about. People who don't have jobs, in my riding at least, talk to me a lot about not having jobs. How do they afford things for their kids? How do they afford

education? How do they afford to take care of their aging and elderly parents who have a lot of problems if they don't have jobs? They're already struggling with the enormous energy bills under the leadership of this government.

At the end of the day, I think what we want to talk about in this debate is how we can do it better than Bill 172.

I'm going to talk, at the start of my speech here today, about the area that I think we need to be talking about in great detail. Climate change is one of the most important issues facing our province and the world, but one of the members opposite earlier said that they were going to solve the world's climate problems with this bill. It might help a little, and certainly we want to be doing our part, but I think it's a little overextension to suggest that Bill 172 is going to solve the world's climate change concerns. So I'm going to put that on the record.

We certainly support investment in transit. We support energy conservation and nuclear. Close to my backyard, Bruce Power signed a milestone agreement with the Independent Electricity System Operator that will create 23,000 jobs, secure the production of 6,300 megawatts of energy, and baseload energy at that—we're not talking about an intermittent source of power; that's baseload energy—and generate \$6.3 billion in annual economic benefits. I want to reiterate that that is emissions-free, clean, green, baseload power that this province depends on. Otherwise, we're in real challenges.

We need to continue to go down that path and make sure that we're providing affordable energy and clean power.

1530

My riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound saw its own share of the wrath of climate change when brutally cold weather froze water pipes in Owen Sound a year or so ago. The unprecedented event—317 frozen services and 50 water main breaks—cost the city \$2.1 million to remedy. The city had to replace about 1.4 kilometres of water mains because of breaks. This crisis emptied out the reserve fund for the city that they had built up over 10 years, so now they're in dire consequences. They did apply to the Liberal government for some emergency management funding, and sadly, that was denied. No assistance was given for that.

What happened in Owen Sound paints a bigger picture. According to the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, which I met with this morning—there's a reception here later this afternoon that all the members can go to and be updated on what's going on. They share with me that the infrastructure deficit is between \$20 billion and \$40 billion. Its impact is felt through water main breaks and, most importantly, in a threat to public health and safety.

In our conversation I talked about how it would be great to be seeing some money go into this that is preventative and is going to create jobs and help our economy, rather than a lot of blunder about what may happen or may not happen and the money that may get spent here.

The environment minister, when challenged by my colleague from Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson, really doesn't ever come out and say what the cost is going to be. Again, it's "Just believe us. Just trust us that we know better than you, and at the end of the day it'll all work out okay."

Well, at the end of the day, we've gone through that with the Green Energy Act. A whole lot of things in that Green Energy Act didn't come through as they were purported to when they rolled it out—against the wishes of democracy, by the way. They took away all of the rights of municipalities to be able to vote whether they want them or don't want them in their backyard—I'm referring to wind turbines. So Mr. Speaker, if we're a little sceptical, you will hopefully appreciate that a little bit.

Most of our water system was built in the 1950s, with some dating back to the 1870s. If we invested \$1 billion in that industry alone, we would create up to 47,000 jobs. Consider that in comparison to the \$700 million we lose to leaky pipes and the cost of energy and the resources dealing with those types of breaks. Underinvestment has major implications on our environment, economy and health.

The government needs to develop a credible plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also protect taxpayers and the economy. That balance is so integral that we have to do it. It isn't one or the other. It isn't trying to put out spin and suggesting that if you don't vote for this bill you're a bad person, you don't care about the world, you don't care about our economy, you don't care about climate and you don't care about those pages sitting in front of you. No, it's a case, again, of needing to do this credibly. We need to understand: If they're going to do this, what is the impact going to be? Is that money that they're going to collect actually going to go to impacting the environment and the climate in a positive way, or is it going into a slush fund, as many people have challenged and questioned the government on?

Cap-and-trade is a new tax on your energy bills and it's going to add taxes to virtually every consumable you can think of out there. One of my constituents came up to me just recently when talking about this and said, "The government can spin this, the Liberals can spin this, however they want, but any money from me as a taxpayer is a tax. You can call it a revenue tool. You can call it anything you want, but if it's coming out of my back pocket to go to the government coffers, it's a tax."

He was very concerned, at the end of the day, about what this tax is actually going to do: "What is it going to do for me as a taxpayer and a constituent and a resident of this great province of Ontario? Can you guarantee me that every single dollar is actually going to be put towards action that will improve our climate?" Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't say yes to that because at the end of the day I don't believe that that fund is going to be set up or that it's going to be accountable. Part of that is my five-year track record here of this Liberal government, which has collected a lot of money—they've had record

revenues—and yet they still incur more debt than they ever have in our history.

Families have already faced hikes between \$1,000 and \$1,400 per year. Some 60 households in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound alone had their hydro shut off in the fall of 2014. Small manufacturers are going to be hit with \$170,000 in new energy costs. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce estimates the hikes will shut down one in 20 manufacturers.

Another study by the major power consumers of Ontario also raised concerns over the fact that we're paying the highest energy rates in North America. That's indisputable, Mr. Speaker. This isn't something we're making up. This isn't just opposition. This is just an actual fact of reality. I hear this every day: small business, large business, people thinking of getting into business—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Going out of business.

Mr. Bill Walker: Going out of business, sadly, too often, my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry tells me. I think he hears this fairly regularly, sadly, as do most of the people in this House. I think even if the Liberals were honest, they would admit to that as well.

The other one that I keep bringing up in this House when we're talking about energy is our schools and hospitals. They will have tough decisions to continue to make when the rates go up yet again. People don't always connect the dots. If those energy rates are doubling and tripling, that is a fixed cost to those institutions. At the end of the day, they have very few pots that they can actually cut. So it comes back down, typically, to nurses in a lot of cases but also front-line staff and a lot of the great people who are in the support mechanism of a hospital or a school that face those cuts.

Just think about it, Mr. Speaker: If an average school board pays about \$4 million a year in hydro rates, then this will add another \$1 million to that expense. Again, where do they find that \$1 million? Typically at the front line. Sadly, in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, that represents—and I'm going to talk about this in a little bit—the actual education assistants. We have already lost 78, which were eliminated in the last year. You can't tell me, Mr. Speaker, that there are less students with special needs the day after they made this decision than the day before. At the end of the day, they're making choices. That's the government putting a school board into a bit of a box, saying, "We're giving you no more money."

But people aren't, as I said earlier, connecting the dots: that it's because of these increasing energy rates. Again, they've quadrupled in the last number of years, and we're predicting—or they're telling us from across the aisle that these are going to actually at least double again in the next four years. So we're back to looking at what those impacts are.

The same in health care: We're cutting nurses, we're cutting front-line care workers, because that operating budget has to be balanced. In legislation, a hospital cannot run a deficit, so they've got to start looking and

saying, "Where are we going to do this to balance our budget?" It's typically, sadly, the front-line care which impacts people the most across the board. At a time when this government is closing hospital beds, cutting seniors' medication and slashing funding for doctors, more hikes, particularly energy hikes, would seriously undermine patient care and front-line care as well.

Right now, everyone is concerned that the Liberals are getting this wrong. I don't see a lot of organizations coming up and saying, "Bill, this is a wonderful thing. You should be supportive." I certainly don't have the chamber of commerce; I don't have the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I don't have those people who are, again, looking out for the long term and the benefit of all consumers, all taxpayers and all constituents that this is a great thing.

Minister Murray, in my mind, and what I hear from my constituents, is misguided. He has bought into this and he's going to sell it, regardless of what anybody says—what rationale we can bring, what groups bring, what experts bring. He has got his mindset, and that's going to be his legacy, come hell or high water, good or bad for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Who leaked it to the media?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to get to the leaks in a minute—absolutely.

Is he ready for \$2-per-litre gasoline and another \$1,500 electricity bill hike? How about those less fortunate than him? Most importantly, are they ready? Are they going to actually be able to manage these situations?

He wants buildings to switch off natural gas and go electric, solar or geothermal, and intermittent solar and wind. Where is this going to come from? It's just going to naturally appear.

Requiring all homes to undergo an energy audit before they are sold and convince all people, including farmers, to drive an electric or hybrid car by 2024: I'm not certain that currently those cars and vehicles are being produced in Ontario. I think my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka eloquated quite well that they're not being produced, and, equally important, where is the infrastructure to support this?

Our farmers run a huge business. They are the backbone of our economy. They're the backbone of most things, because if we don't have good, healthy food, there's not much we're going to be able to do. And yet we don't just have a charging station down every back road or concession. These farmers can't be taking time to drive 30 and 40 miles if the infrastructure was even there. So it bewilders me a bit how he's going to, almost overnight, change our whole system without the realities and the practicality of making it happen.

He's also including school buses—making school buses electric. Again, great theme, but what's the practicality? What's the reality of truly supporting this?

There are some sensible solutions to work with, such as building regional rail networks and cycling infrastructure, including curb-separated bike lanes.

There's an undeniable financial burden of the cap-and-trade scheme. It's not just the Ontario public, the industry associations and experts who are worried the minister is in way over his head. Some of those in his party and in cabinet, including even past ministers, believe and have said that he's going too far. My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex suggested that we—what's Monte's riding?

Mr. Norm Miller: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

1540

Mr. Bill Walker: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Thank you. He's suggesting about these leaks. This morning, there was a leak from cabinet ministers in their own caucus saying, "We don't agree. This is not where we need to go. This isn't something we can support."

I credit whoever the people were who put that leak out to actually step up and tell them that you're not going down that road. There's always time to pull back. The member from Sudbury, earlier in his comments today, talked about hitting a wall and why you don't veer off, why you don't hold back before you hit the wall. I would like to suggest that hopefully, at least, there is someone over there showing a glimmer of hope, because we've been saying that for four years when it comes to the big debt hole that they keep screaming towards and yet continue to overspend every year and add to that debt burden.

Minister Murray is accused of shunning his ministry partners, such as energy minister Bob Chiarelli and economic development minister Brad Duguid. He is also accused of ignoring their advice. We can't get into this where it's the ideology of one person driving something and saying, "Just listen to me because I have the ability and the power," and he's putting more power into this bill. These ministers, of course, would object to Minister Murray's plans to close down the province's nuclear power plants and natural gas and kill more auto industry jobs, for which they are respectively responsible.

I said it here earlier in the House today: Former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara said, and I'm going to quote, "There's no evidence anywhere in the world that the cap-and-trade ... actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions ... I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme other than it's going to bring a lot of ... money into the government."

Mr. Speaker, that is their former Liberal finance minister, someone who has served in this House for many, many years. People respect him.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Bring Greg back.

Mr. Bill Walker: I never thought I might say that, but yes: Bring Greg back.

Even the word "scheme" is in there. When a former Liberal cabinet minister uses the word "scheme," you know that he has valid concerns. This is a \$1.9-billion-a-year slush fund. Five separate OPP investigations—bribery, fraud and the destruction of evidence—yet we're supposed to just believe and trust that they have a scheme that's actually going to save, in their words, the world.

None of us, Mr. Speaker, can get a clear answer on what this plan will cost, yet we know it will send \$3

billion into the California economy by 2030, paid for by Ontario businesses and families. You and I and our families and the people we're given the privilege to serve will be paying that.

It's a bit like Groundhog Day. We followed jurisdictions in Germany and California in the past in regard to the Green Energy Act. I think most people, if they objectively look at what was promised with the Green Energy Act and what it has delivered, would suggest it is not working. It has not worked and it will not work. I would ask: Why would we, again, continue down the path of following California and send \$3 billion annually to their economy as opposed to our economy?

I'm starting to run out of time so I'm going to flip back a little bit to talk a bit more about nuclear. I can't fathom that this Minister of the Environment wants to get rid of the industry that actually produces 60% of baseload power for this great province. It's emissions-free. It's clean. It's green. It's baseload. It's good jobs. It has a huge ripple effect in the manufacturing sector. It drives the economy of our province. It employs 45,600 people; \$2.5 billion is the amount the nuclear industry generates in direct and secondary economic activity in Ontario every year.

In 2016, this government, the Liberal government, actually announced that they were going to refurbish the existing fleet of nuclear reactors at both Darlington and Bruce Power. Yet the environment minister comes out and says that within 10 years he sees it gone. Maybe that was just him, not talking to his colleagues, not following scripted notes, but that raises big doubts for everybody. How can a government go down a path and say, "We've committed to this," but then the environment minister comes out and speaks? There's either something going on behind the scenes we don't know about, or he needs to step up clean and put it in black and white that unequivocally our nuclear industry will move forward.

He's also talked—interesting, the same environment minister—about getting rid of natural gas. There's a lot of work going on in three municipalities, Huron-Kinloss, the municipality of Kincardine and, closer to my heart, Arran-Elderslie, that do not have natural gas now. A lot of agricultural communities, the big grain dryers, they've been working extremely hard. In fact, they've signed an agreement with a company to bring natural gas, which is going to give them parity, the ability to compete equally with the rest of Ontario, and the rest of the country, frankly.

Now we have an environment minister saying, "No, no, no, we need to get off of natural gas." Most residents that have it, I think if you polled them one-on-one and said, "Do you want to get rid of natural gas to this cap-and-trade scheme?" and give the facts to them, I think it would be an unequivocal, resounding "Absolutely not."

At the end of the day, I'm not certain where this minister gets these ideas. Is he just trying to spin? We cannot afford to do environmentalism photo ops and try to sell our great public a bill of goods. We need to ensure that we know what we're doing and that there are actually viable plans in place.

The minister announced this just a month ago, after he announced the \$100-million green fund to use natural gas to fight climate change. So again, I'm not certain. Minister Murray said, "This investment will help" keep "Ontario on the path toward a low-carbon future." In the last election, they pledged \$200 million to bring natural gas to rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just not certain. Is it yin and yang? Can we not get our stories straight? Is it trying to deflect and defer, or is he just fundamentally, "I am going to do this because I have the power to move forward"? We can't afford that. We've done it with the Green Energy Act and we're all paying big prices for that. No one is denying that we need to be taking action, but it needs to be done in a balanced manner.

Natural gas is a model for the world. Canada's own environmental scientist and esteemed energy thinker, Vaclav Smil, has called it "fuel for the 21st century." Why is this Minister Murray replacing what works with what doesn't? Why does this minister think he knows better than an environmental scientist? Who do the people of Ontario trust, I ask you, Mr. Speaker: Glen Murray, the Minister of the Environment, or an environmental scientist who says we have to have natural gas as part of our mix?

I have tried to suggest in here that we want some balance. We want to know that we actually are doing something that is going to help. We're not going to stand here and tell you we're going to solve climate change for the world when that's not a fact that we can back up—although Minister Murray seems to think so. We're certainly not going to just go out and do environmental opportunism when it's people's lives at stake. The future of our planet needs addressing; so does the future of the people who we are given the privilege to serve. We'll do it in balance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's always a pleasure to rise. I want to thank my colleague the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He touched on a whole host of issues. It speaks to the complexity of this bill as it relates to the enormity of its implications and effects it will have on everyday people, whether it be the status of our economy and our economic prosperity, whether it be health ramifications or whether it be the pressures on municipalities to keep up with infrastructure spending and funding. This is heady stuff and incredibly complex, but it is very much required for us to debate and to consult and to communicate and to be really pensive about how we do it right and how we get it right.

Do I believe as an individual, as an Ontarian and as an elected official that this bill will solve global climate change? Of course not. It is a global problem. We need to act as citizens of the planet. But as a developed country, and one that has built its economy on contributing for generations to greenhouse gas emissions, we have to be cognizant of that and we have to acknowledge that it is our responsibility to do the right thing, to play a role in

setting a standard, setting a precedent, and also supporting those developing countries in their journey towards a low-carbon economy.

It is imperative. We are damned if we don't, and it seems like we're damned if we do, but if we do it right, this could be transformational for our economy and provide prosperity for generations to come. That's what my hope is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to stand on Bill 172 on climate change. I must say to my good friend and colleague across the way from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, for a young athlete like him, I was quite concerned that he was going to run out of breath. But he kept going, and all the more power to him.

As we talk about this, it reminds me of what I've been going through for the last 20 years at home. That's with someone who is light-years ahead of me on this: my good wife, Donna, who has espoused all of these points for two decades now, actually—just a wife who you pay attention to, like we all do. I have to tell you, now that she wants another car, it has to be an electric car. I don't know what I'm going to do, because I love her, but I can't afford to do all of those things at once. So I'll just continue to do my very best.

1550

The second-last thing she did was that she talked us into solar. We've done two solar buildings at our place. All you have to do is sign on the dotted line. She convinced me she had a budget and it would work out. Actually, it has worked out very well. She's done very well and she could foresee the future.

I just want to tell you that on such a long-term framework for climate action and a stronger foundation for this cap-and-trade program, we want to ensure the transparency and accountability of Ontario's path toward a low-carbon economy and the use of proceeds to support greenhouse gas reductions. It's long overdue. It has been a long time in the works. Ontario is one of the leaders, with Quebec and California, and now it has gone worldwide. It's there. Get used to it.

Remember, the bill does outline two great, important main issues. One is that emissions reduction targets and action plans are there, and the cap-and-trade program will use the proceeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just want to commend my honourable colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who really understands this issue well. He's heard from his constituents. In fact, he hears the same message that I hear every single day and that I think every MPP in this House hears, regardless of political stripe. It comes down to two things that people are concerned about when they hear news like they do today: The fact that we have a government considering banning natural gas to heat new home construction, and secondly, how they're dramatically going to shift the auto industry in this province.

We have a government who thinks they know what's best for business and consumer choices out there. I happen to believe that the free market decides what products sell.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound really raised a number of issues that people are concerned about: cost of living and job security in this province. He mentioned specifically the environment minister talking about the nuclear industry and he made it sound like within 10 years, the government was going to wind down the nuclear industry. That's what the Minister of the Environment said in his speech at, I believe, the Economic Club, or wherever he was speaking—the Sierra Club, maybe.

We have different ministers saying different things. One of the issues and comments that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound raised was: Which cabinet minister leaked this document? There's obviously division within Kathleen Wynne's Liberal cabinet. I think that raises serious issues as well. I'm concerned about the signal that the news that came out today is sending to the business community in the province, whether it's the utilities that are investing in the province or the auto industry. I'll have more to say about that later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He always does his homework and certainly presents factual information which we can decipher to the good or bad, whichever way we field on our position on this.

There's no doubt that everyone in this province and everyone in this country wants to lower greenhouse gas emissions. We all witness global warming. We all witness the weather patterns that are changing and all the tragedies that have happened: the dryness, the floods, the earth slides and all the things that are going on. Something is definitely changing drastically. As some of the members on the government side have pointed out, especially the member from Etobicoke North, if you travel and go to other countries, you can see the results of some of these tragedies, whether it be earthquakes from fracking or whether it be mudslides or torrential rain or tornadoes. They've doubled their tornadoes in the last 10 years in the Midwest, which is very scary.

But besides the weather trends, I have some problems with the cap-and-trade program in reference to the credits. You get credits, and you can sell your credits, if you don't use them, to other companies. Well, my fear is that if you sell these credits to other companies, they're going to use them as opposed to doing something about reduction themselves. If the credits are cheaper to buy from another company and use rather than doing preventive measures on your own emissions, then I think that's going to be a negative and a drawback. I don't think that has been spelled out in this bill at all, about the creating of credits. I think that will end up being a major problem unless they address it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We go back to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank those members from Essex, Ajax–Pickering, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I didn't get it on the record earlier that this was actually debated a little bit in general government. There were actually 100 amendments that the Liberals brought to their own bill. To me, frankly, it says that you didn't do your homework if you're bringing in 100 amendments.

They actually rejected every single one of our party's that we brought. We were trying to, again, at least find some practicality in this bill. We wanted some accountability and some tax relief; they aimed for less accountability, less transparency and less tax fairness.

Their cap-and-trade scheme will not effectively tackle climate change, and they can't guarantee it will. That's one of the concerns we have. It's not just optics, Mr. Speaker. We need to be doing things that are going to make it a better life for Ontarians. What we see is that this will actually make life more complicated and less affordable for Ontarians, and increase the cost of doing business in our province across all walks of life.

Ontarians are already being bilked out of billions for hydro. In fact, the Auditor General says we've overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion between 2006 and 2014, and we'll be overcharged by another \$133 billion by 2032.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, has already stated in this House that we're going to send \$3 billion a year to California by the year 2030. Just think of what \$3 billion could do for our health care, for our hospitals and for our education system if it was left here in Ontario.

The member from Sudbury said we're going to hit a wall, and it's a mirage. I would ask him about the debt hole that they continually scream towards and don't veer off or put the brakes on. He said this bill is going to fix the planet. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully suggest to you that this bill may help in some ways, and hopefully there are some ways if they ram it through, but at the end of the day it's not going to fix the planet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. As always, it's a privilege to be called upon as one of the 107 voices in Ontario's provincial Parliament.

This Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas, will enact the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

If I may, Speaker, allow me to state right off the top that New Democrats were looking forward to supporting a cap-and-trade approach in the fight against climate change. We wanted a system that would be seen by almost everyone to be fair, effective and transparent. We were optimistic that the Liberal members of the committee on general government would be open-minded. We were hoping they would see fit to listen to valid suggestions. We were expecting them to adopt reasonable amendments which would have made this bill more fair, more effective and more transparent. But, Speaker, I'm reminded of Paul Newman's famous quote from the

movie *Cool Hand Luke*: “What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.”

When this bill was discussed at the committee level, New Democrats put forward a number of amendments designed to improve the language of the bill. The Liberal reaction to those NDP amendments has left many of us dispirited, disappointed and disillusioned.

The Liberals have been talking about doing something on the climate change file for the past eight or nine years. They’ve had five Ministers of the Environment in that time, and we thought we finally had one who knew what he was talking about. We put our faith in that minister. I still have faith in that minister, Mr. Murray, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

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So I am befuddled, absolutely befuddled, as to why our suggestions on ways to make this bill more presentable were ignored by the Liberal members of that committee. How can this bill be seen to be fair, effective and transparent when there’s nothing in here that addresses the inequality and disproportionate burden that this bill will have on low-income families? How can this bill be seen as fair, effective and transparent when there’s nothing in here to offset the extra costs this bill will have on families in the more remote areas or the northern regions of our huge province? This bill is modelled on legislation already in place in Alberta and British Columbia as well as California. So why didn’t the Liberals follow those models and take low-income families into account?

We all know families struggling just to put food on the table. They have to get by financially and they have to use more of their limited incomes to pay for fuel, to put gas in the family car or the family pickup. This bill should have had a provision that a proportion of the cap-and-trade revenues would go for a rebate for those most in need. This is the model adopted in British Columbia. This is the plan that will soon be in place in Alberta. The law in California mandates that at least one quarter—25%—of cap-and-trade auction revenues must be spent on programs that benefit what they term as “disadvantaged communities.”

Speaker, this bill will see all of us paying more for our fuel. In our more remote communities, diesel has to be hauled in to run the generators that provide the power. These hardy souls don’t have the option of hopping on a subway or taking a GO train. They have no alternatives. They will be disproportionately disadvantaged.

You can’t take a cookie-cutter approach to climate change. You have to make exceptions. You must look at the big picture and not penalize those who can least afford it. That’s not just New Democrats saying this. The Canadian Environmental Law Association called for a legislative requirement to use revenue from the cap-and-trade program to counteract the impacts of the program on low-income communities. They suggested that the California example of 25% to start with, but possibly more, should “be used to mitigate the impacts ... on low-income, First Nation and other marginalized communities.”

So, Speaker, it didn’t seem to me to be an unreasonable request to the Liberal members on that committee that studied this bill to consider this as a matter of some significance. After all, their bill is based on others already in effect and already taking such action. But no, they wouldn’t. They wouldn’t have it. They wouldn’t have any of it.

So I ask you, Speaker: Can the language before us today be even remotely seen as fair, effective and transparent? I think not. I think it’s looking more and more like a Liberal cash grab. It will be a slush fund that the Liberals will be using to scratch their way out of debt on the backs of the most vulnerable of Ontario’s citizens.

New Democrats—in Ottawa and in our provinces—have always been champions of the environment. We believe in lowering the greenhouse gases that have contributed to climate change. We recognize the crisis our planet is facing. We don’t wish to see the Earth’s average temperature jumping by two degrees. We expect irreversible harm would result. That’s why we say it is so important—so absolutely vital—that we get this right the first time. We favour taking the politics out and putting some common sense back in.

I mentioned last week, Speaker, that I’m very proud to have five grandchildren now: four girls and a boy. I want to leave this planet in better shape for them than it is right now. I’m sure I’m no different from anyone else in this chamber. We don’t want to sit back and watch the world destroyed by pollution. We don’t want to sit back and do nothing as our citizens in most need fall further and further behind.

We have an opportunity right here and right now to correct a mistake. There’s no shame in admitting to a mistake. There is honour in correcting a wrong. It is wrong that, so far, the Liberals haven’t turned our attention to the details in this bill, details that harm our citizens living in northern and remote communities, our citizens living at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. We shouldn’t burden them with more costs. We should provide a rebate for their extra costs, and the Liberals can do it with a stroke of a pen.

I know they’re anxious to pay their bills and show a balanced budget before the next election, but why not use some of this new revenue stream to offset the added bite that this bill will take out of the wallets of those who can least afford it? Think about it. It’s the right thing to do.

Of course, Speaker, it would also be the right thing to do to make sure that Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner had a voice and a role to play with this new bill. Right now, she’s completely disregarded. She needs access to information so the cap-and-trade system can be properly assessed, so we can measure the effectiveness of this program, and so we can judge whether we’re doing the right things.

The Financial Accountability Officer says he won’t be able to tell whether the government will actually spend the cap-and-trade revenue on new greenhouse gas reduction initiatives. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to create a regulatory scheme to reduce greenhouse gases to

protect the environment, to help us transition to a low-carbon economy and to coordinate such actions with other jurisdictions as part of a global response to climate change.

Who's to judge the success of that initiative? I would suggest the Environmental Commissioner, the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General among others, as well as the general public. If the public doesn't like what it sees, how it's being rolled out, how their money is collected and spent and why, then the public will have the final say. Believe you me, Speaker, when the public sees how these Liberals are using these funds with no accountability, the public will indeed have the final word. Actually, Speaker, it'll be two words: "You're fired."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am absolutely delighted to have a chance to comment on the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's comments. I've got to say, Speaker, that that is the strangest way to say thank you I've ever heard from a member of the opposition parties.

I sat through those committee hearings in general government. I sat as we went through amendment after amendment being proposed by the third party, and we accepted them. Maybe not precisely the moment they came forward, but we worked with them in order to craft an amendment that would work for all of us.

In fact, in one amendment we were agreeing with them to go forward with it, but after an hour and a half of filibustering by the official opposition, we forgot what the motion was and we actually voted against it. We were able, through our initiative with legal counsel and the Clerk, to be able to get that motion back in another place because we were co-operating absolutely fully with the members of the third party. I've heard the minister repeated times give credit where credit was due to the member from Toronto–Danforth, notwithstanding his histrionics today, but giving credit because we worked together on it.

I'd get this criticism if it were coming from the members of the official opposition because we didn't accept any of their motions because there were no amendments there that would have done anything to improve the bill. In fact, the cruel irony of what the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has to say about the one amendment he talked about, the 25% going to low-income households—a noble objective, but what that in effect would do is take our cap-and-trade scheme and turn it into a tax-and-dividend scheme for 25% of the proceeds involved, which puts him now firmly in the camp—at least 25% of him—of the members of the opposition party who want tax-and-dividend programs.

It's absolutely important: This is not a social income distribution system under cap-and-trade. As noble as that objective is, this is about reducing greenhouse gases, and that's why those kinds of amendment had to be rejected as we did reject the amendments associated with adaptation, because that's not the intention of this bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to stand and offer my comments to the remarks by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I listened with interest to what he was saying, and I have to agree with a lot of what he was saying. We should be working together on these things, because it is an important issue. However, we've seen from the past that trying to work with this government has been an issue when amendments, or whatever else, are rejected at a lot of committees, not just the one that was handing this issue.

He also said he had five grandchildren. I have five grandchildren too. You know something? They're all \$22,000 in debt right now, every one of them. This is before this "scheme," as the member from Beaches–East York just said, is implemented. What effect it will have on the people of Ontario currently is going to be an issue. Certainly, by the time my grandchildren become taxpayers, it's going to be more of an issue.

We believe that this should be a revenue-neutral bill. However, that has been firmly rejected by the government, with a lot of the money going out of the province.

I think the member from Windsor–Tecumseh had a lot of things right, in that we need to address this situation but do it in a way that is going to be fair to Ontarians.

Right now, I have some in the agriculture business switching to diesel generators because they can't get natural gas. I have some industries changing to natural gas generators because they can't afford the hydro. Now we see, from recent articles, that that may be eliminated in a few years by what the Minister of the Environment has said in a news release that we saw in the papers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Continuing with questions and comments: the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on the speech given by my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I came across an article this morning from the Guardian that states that April marks the highest global average temperature that we've ever had since we began recording global temperatures. This is a pattern of seven months in a row where we've set records.

Evidently, obviously, global warming is here. I think that's shown in the title of the bill: Climate Change Mitigation. We are, even in the title, accepting that we will now, as a society, have to mitigate against the effects of climate change.

Time is of the essence. That begs us to come to real, rational and concrete efforts to support our communities in working together to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

That's why I take a little bit of issue with the member from Beaches–East York when he says that this isn't social engineering—I'm sorry, I can't quote you verbatim—that this isn't a social distribution program. What you're acknowledging is that, through the imple-

mentation of this bill, you are going to harm the most vulnerable people in the province, when you know and acknowledge that they aren't going to be able to handle the economic impacts of this bill.

What we're talking about is recognizing and acknowledging that the new revenue that you're getting is coming from those people. They, today, can't afford to make ends meet, but you don't care, evidently. You don't care. This is about the Liberal agenda, and that's okay. What we're talking about is making it fair, making it equitable and transparent, and having buy-in from society.

We know that all the programs that these guys have delivered, they've got it wrong, each and every time, the first and second time. Let's get it right the first time for once.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to join in this debate.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned he has five grandchildren, and then the member from Perth–Wellington mentioned he had five grandchildren. Speaker, I am the proud grandmother of five grandchildren, too. I think the eldest just turned eight last week.

I look at those beautiful little children and I, too, think about what we need to be doing here, today, in the positions that we hold to ensure that they inherit a planet that is habitable and that can sustain the population.

We do need to change how we conduct business. We do need to address issues around climate change very seriously. There are real costs associated with doing nothing. I think we all have a moral responsibility. Change is difficult—change is always difficult—but we would be in dereliction of our duties if we did not take this kind of strong action.

I look at the pages who are with us today. They don't have a say in this debate, although I bet they have some ideas. But I'll bet you if you asked the pages, they would say, "Do whatever you need to do to make sure that our planet remains one on which we want to live," so that they too can stand up one day in this House and talk about their five grandchildren.

Speaker, when it comes to low-income people, I think everyone in this House knows that we do have a support program for people on low incomes when it comes to helping to pay their electricity bills: the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It's been very disappointing to hear some members of the opposition say that it's not their job to inform their constituents. In fact, it is their job.

All of this together will make a brighter future for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments, which concludes this round.

I return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You know, I'm a little bit surprised here that the member for Beaches–East York

would admit to being dazed and confused while being on the committee and forgetting what he was voting on. Forget that the amendments were there; he couldn't remember what he was voting on.

He also said that it was a "noble objective," but that the disadvantage would be getting 25% of the revenue. But they're doing it in California, they're doing it in British Columbia, they're doing it in Alberta, or will be doing it in Alberta, and this is the model on which this bill is based.

The sad part of this bill is that the Liberals haven't sold it very well. They haven't gone out and told the people yet exactly what they're doing with the money. So the impression amongst a lot of people, not just on this side of the House but in the general public, is that you're setting up a slush fund. You've got a cash grab going on that's going to help you pay down your debts, that's going to help you pay your bills, and it's going to cost them more money. With that out there, I'm telling you, you're going to run into a wall of opposition.

My friend from Perth–Wellington mentioned his five grandchildren, and the Deputy Premier as well. I must say that the Deputy Premier talked about a moral responsibility. I believe, New Democrats believe, it is a moral responsibility to look after the most vulnerable in our society, to give a hand up to those at the lowest income levels. If they're doing it in California, if they're doing it in Alberta, if they're doing it in British Columbia, for God's sake, why aren't we going to do it in Ontario? We have to do more. We're going to be costing them more money. We have to go out of our way to make sure that they won't be paying more of the price, that we won't be hitting them with more of the impact that this bill will leverage, will lay on their heads. We've got to do more to look after the most disadvantaged. That's why we were hoping the Liberals would listen to our amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We've had quite an interesting debate on this bill this afternoon. I've heard a lot of things that certainly interest me, in different members' perspectives on this bill and how they figure it's going to work or not going to work. I think we should go back and get an idea of just exactly what cap-and-trade is, because that definition has maybe been lost a little bit.

Under a cap-and-trade scheme, the government sets gradually decreasing limits, or caps—that's where the "cap" comes in—on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions allowed from companies that meet a certain threshold. In Ontario, that threshold will be 25,000 tonnes for major emitters. And for major emitters, that will be something that will—a definition will come out for who is a major emitter.

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Companies that exceed those limits must purchase emission allowances from companies that come in under the cap. That can be a dangerous part of this whole thing. These purchases, or trades, put a market price on carbon.

Companies can also exceed their caps by purchasing off-set credits, which, in Quebec, include capturing methane from manure storage facilities and landfills.

Despite the concerns of industry, Speaker, the government has rushed to table this bill. They intend to ram it through—of course, that's what we're seeing here—to get their cap-and-trade scheme, which was mentioned by the member from Beaches–East York, up and running and generating new revenue by January 1, 2017. Ontario's scheme will be linked to those already operating in Quebec and California under the Western Climate Initiative.

Speaker, the government intends to raise \$478 million from this cap-and-trade in 2016-17. By 2017-18, the Liberals will increase cap-and-trade revenue to \$1.9 billion. That's actually up from their projections of \$1.3 billion. This revenue will cover their spending spree on the Green Investment Fund as well as other major projects and programs that are supposed to be outlined in the government's upcoming climate action plan.

Speaker, in this province, we've had so much experience with the Green Energy Act—not good experience at all. This is another scheme that was intended to fill in or produce electricity and reduce greenhouse gases, and it was called green energy. The difficulty with this business is that when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining and these wind turbines aren't producing and the solar panels aren't producing, you have to have gas-fired generators online to take up the slack. So what's green about it? You're putting pollution back in the air.

With all the subsidy money that has been spent on these turbines, they only produce about 4% of the electricity being produced in Ontario. All those turbines you see out in the country—they're the most visible. From Essex, right up north, along the lake, along Huron county, into parts of Wellington county, which I represent, here it is, less than 4%, with all those turbines in the air. It hasn't been a success at all, except if you happen to own the company that's putting the wind turbines up. So it has been a terrible failure.

They continue approving these applications. In fact, Speaker, whether you know or not, they're actually going to put one up between a couple of airports up in Collingwood—terrible decision. I would hate to have trouble in a small airplane and have to dodge those things or get into some bad weather where you can't see them—if you're in a small airplane trying to land at that airport.

The proposed cap-and-trade scheme would cover roughly 150 emitters and would operate within three-year compliance periods, the first being 2017 to 2020. The government will set an overall limit on emissions, and both sell and give free allowances to companies to emit up to that limit. Each allowance is equal to one tonne of greenhouse gases. According to the Liberals' budget, they will set the initial carbon price at \$18 a tonne. During the compliance period, emitters would be required to meet caps that decline between 4% and 5% a year. If emitters cannot meet those caps, they must purchase allowances to ensure they hold enough allow-

ances to equal their permitted emissions during the compliance period. Some trade-exposed industries, like the cement, steel and chemical industries, have received their free emission allowances and therefore will not face higher costs to meet declining caps. However, the government is requiring the natural gas and petroleum industries to purchase all of their emission allowances during the first compliance period. That is why the cost of natural gas, gasoline, diesel and propane will go up.

Speaker, this is of great concern to my riding and certainly many ridings in rural Ontario and many ridings in northern Ontario because we depend on some of these fuels to supply electricity to where we live and some of the industries we are providing. There's a number of diesel-powered generators, as I said before, in my area, powering grain operations because now, unfortunately, it's cheaper to do that than buy hydro from Ontario Hydro. It's more cost-effective. Unfortunately, they are putting pollution into the air, and they know that, but there comes a time when, if the books aren't balancing, you have to do something sometimes that maybe is not what you should be doing. But you still have to pay the bills. As we see with more of these things happening throughout Ontario, this type of thing is going to continue.

I also worry, Speaker, as we've seen—and this has been brought up many times in the House today, at least by this side and the third party—in an article that came out over the weekend in a local newspaper, that even this government is having an issue with this whole energy business because now we find out that they want to get rid of natural gas in a number of years. The Minister of the Environment kicked around the nuclear industry last weekend and certainly attacked the car industry last week. So we don't really know where they're going. I don't think they know where they are going on some of these issues. It sure caused a lot of talk in the business industry and in the energy industry as to just exactly what's happening here.

Mr. Bill Walker: Nuclear industry.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The nuclear industry. When statements like that come out, Speaker, it affects the economy of this province and certainly will affect job creation. If companies are looking at these types of statements and see that the government is having issues within their own caucus, as we've seen this past week, why would you want to invest in Ontario? Why wouldn't you take your company somewhere else or move what you have here and go somewhere else when all this talk is going on, when the government of the day can't even figure out what they want to do, and when they do try to figure out what they want to do, then it's changed the next week and these documents are leaked to the public? I can see some real worry about industries that are in Ontario right now and maybe some of those that were maybe planning to come to Ontario, and that's unfortunate.

This is a great province. We have so much potential in this province and energy has to be stable. We have to

have a stable energy source. We have to have confidence in where that energy's coming from, and that it will be there today, tomorrow and the next day. What's happened this last little while certainly doesn't give industry much confidence, in my opinion, of either staying here or relocating here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that people in this House all agree that we need to do something about our impact as humans on this planet and this community we call home. It's very clear on many levels that we've left an impact, that we've had an impact on our environment, whether we look at the greenhouse gas emissions that we've produced as a society, whether we look at climate change or something more concrete and real that no one can deny, that we've polluted our waters and our land, the earth.

If we look at a real-life example, I was speaking with someone who told me they used to swim in the Don River, the river that comes through Toronto, that empties out in Lake Ontario. They used to swim in that river. He was mentioning how that same river that he and his friends used to come together and go on weekends to swim in is now so polluted that he would not be able to swim in it. That was in his own lifetime.

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If we look at the impact intergenerationally—not just in one lifetime, but in future generations—it's something that's very troubling. But there is hope. There is the possibility of changing this direction. We have an amazing capacity for innovation. We can positively impact our environment. Much like we are concerned about our homes—we want to make sure we take care of them, keep them clean, keep them safe—we have that same responsibility to our environment.

While I'm encouraged by a plan that is purported to protect our environment through cap-and-trade, we need to make sure that this plan isn't just a PR exercise or something that sounds good in a headline. It has to be effective in actually creating results. It actually has to change something. We don't have the luxury of having a flashy news line; we need real results that actually improve our environment and reduce the emissions that we're producing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Again, it gives me pleasure to have a chance to comment on the member from Perth–Wellington and his comments on Bill 172.

Let me start by saying that the member referenced a couple of times in his remarks me using the expression “scheme,” as if he had got me in some kind of a gotcha. I know the member from Owen Sound would be the same. I just want to give you guys a little bit of a grammar lesson here, because “scheme,” as a noun, is defined as “a large-scale systemic plan or arrangement for obtaining some particular object or putting a particular idea into effect.” It's kind of neutral.

But if you want to get into the verb “scheming,” then as a verb, “scheming” tends to have more of a nefarious meaning. But as a noun, it's perfectly right to understand that a “plan” and a “scheme,” in the context we're using them, are perfectly acceptable. Some members might think I should withdraw or that I might clarify, but I have no intention of doing so. This is a scheme. This is a plan. It's a plan to achieve a particular objective.

The interesting thing is that it's the particular objective which we don't believe is shared by the member opposite from Perth–Wellington. They want to go down a tax-and-dividend route, which will not have the kinds of benefits we know we can get from a cap-and-trade program. If you just take the money through gas taxes and give it back to people, they won't be making the kinds of significant carbon change reduction decisions necessary, unless that amount is extraordinarily high.

That's why in BC they're not getting the reductions and carbon credits that they'd hoped. They're not getting them because to do so, you'd have to increase the price of gasoline 30, 40, 50 cents a litre to change behaviour. I've spoken about this before. It relates to the inelasticity of demand for energy. So it's absolutely important that we recognize that we are with a very important scheme here to do the right thing, which is to reduce carbon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to get up, especially when I get to follow the member from Beaches–East York and his latest scheme, I guess. Maybe he's right about the dictionary, but people have a feeling for what the word “scheme” is and that's probably a polite way to put this whole plan, if that's what you want to call it.

We look at the objective, and people are starting to wonder, are we looking at just bankrupting this province? You've done your best over the 13 years. The Green Energy Act has placed it so that our energy is so high that I'll often talk with the member beside me here when he talks about farmers putting in diesel generators. They're doing that because they can't afford the electricity extensions.

In Glengarry–Prescott–Russell—one of his constituents asked me to go up to talk to him. He had a huge diesel generator for three-phase power. He said it was much cheaper than getting Hydro One in. Isn't that sad that you can now generate on a one-on-one basis? And that really generates another serious problem: As people start to get off the grid, who's going to pay for it?

Unfortunately, he talked about being confused and dazed at the committee meetings. I know sometimes it's hard to keep interest in some of these meetings, especially when—we went through our amendments; they didn't accept one of them. A lot of it was around the Financial Accountability Officer, where we were trying to listen to the warning he had given: that this bill was outside his reach and outside the reach of the Auditor General. I can't help but wonder, why would this government do that? What are they afraid of to have an independent set

of eyes looking at it? This is a huge amount of money. We're talking not millions, but billions of dollars in credits and money that will be collected from this scheme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment? The member for Essex.

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks, friends. It's an honour to join this debate, one of the more crucial debates that I think any one of us will ever have in our careers as elected officials. There's no more pressing issue facing our species than what we are doing to our planet and how we are to ensure that it is habitable for generations to come.

I think one of the first things we have to do is acknowledge that what we've done in the past has led to where we are today. The systems that we've put in place—our economic systems, our systems of utilizing our resources, resources extraction—all have to be scrutinized. And we have to do it through a lens of humanity, of course taking into consideration all the economic impacts, the health impacts, the societal impacts that such a monumental change of this sort will place. But I think we're up to the job. If we weren't, then I don't think we would have put our names on the ballot. I'm certainly up to the job. My community and our communities demand us to do that. Of course, we won't always agree, but what we have to do is persevere in the knowledge that what we are doing is right.

We have the luxury of actually even having this debate in a democratic system and a democratic society. It is a luxury that we afford and, therefore, it is our responsibility to use this democracy to try to fix and figure out some of the world's most pressing problems. I'm just wholly encouraged that we're having this debate. I'm listening intently to all members, and I'm thankful that it's being conducted in a respectful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's the end of our questions and comments for this particular round.

I return to the member for Perth–Wellington for his response.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to thank the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Beaches–East York, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Essex for their comments.

It's interesting. It's too bad—I guess I can't say what I was going to say, but there's a definition in here or an explanation from a former member of this House by the name of Greg Sorbara. He said, "The Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme is a cash-grab in the name of the environment—plain and simple." Then he said—what's worse—"There's no evidence anywhere in the world that ... cap-and-trade ... actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions." He continued, "Until I see that evidence ... I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme, other than it's going to bring a lot of new money into the government."

I think that's the issue here. Certainly, we would favour a carbon-neutral plan, but that would be no good

to this government because it would bring in no more money—no more new money—for them and we all understand the serious debt problem this government has. That's why they went to this type of thing, because of their debt problem and the lack of management for the last number of years that this government's been in power. We're over \$300 billion in debt and they're going to be using this money to pay for some of their other things, such as to help pay for infrastructure and things like that. That's what it is, plain and simple: It's a tax grab.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

1640

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Again, Speaker, it's an honour to speak here. First and foremost, the Ontario New Democratic Party supports a cap-and-trade system as a way to address climate change. However, we want the system to be fair, we want it to be effective and we want it to be transparent. That's where I will focus the majority of my comments.

My colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh talked a lot about the fairness aspect. He pointed to jurisdictions like California and British Columbia that have carved out portions of their cap-and-trade system in terms of the revenue that they receive, to identify the impact that their systems have on low-income and vulnerable citizens. It may be one of the more progressive things that those jurisdictions have ever done, in acknowledging, before they even implement legislation, that that legislation is going to hurt some people and, "We're going to make sure that we mitigate that first and foremost."

Why do that? Well, my colleague spoke about our moral responsibility to do that. I think, again, as humans on this planet, we have a responsibility to ensure that there is equality and fairness and justice, and that every person has the ability to live in dignity and live without the burdens of poverty, especially if we know that the legislation and the actions of a government increase those burdens on people. It's our absolute responsibility to acknowledge that, and it's something that the government has failed to do.

Why are we so strong on this issue and why are we so adamant that it should make up a portion of the cap-and-trade system? Any sociologist that you speak to around the planet, anyone who studies income inequality and poverty, will tell you that inequality threatens the social fabric of societies. It's indisputable. Where you find growing levels of inequality is where you find the fabric being dismantled. You find higher rates of crime; you find higher rates of incarceration; you find higher rates of health-related, socio-health-related impacts.

If you know, and it has been acknowledged by the member from Beaches–East York—I can't believe he said it, but he has a tendency to say things that aren't well thought out; it is at least a measure of candour on his part. If you know that this bill—they don't really care whether it does harm some people. I think that's a failure

and I think it's inexcusable to acknowledge that your legislation will harm people and yet you will do nothing to mitigate that.

Again, acknowledging that the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act has the potential of increasing inequality, let's imagine the costs associated with that increase in inequality. Everyone knows it's going to cost us more downstream in higher levels of health care, in higher levels throughout our judicial system and our criminal system. This is just what happens. It's not what we like, it's not what we want, but, as society becomes less and less fair, people tend to look at other means to survive. We can't let that happen. We have to address it; we have to acknowledge it. It costs money, frankly. I think it's a reasonable starting point to acknowledge it and to set aside money in the case that those effects actually transpire. So that's the fairness part of it.

I'm going to jump to the transparent part of it because, as we know, through the mechanics of the climate change mitigation act, or through even a cap-and-trade system, there is revenue that the government will indeed take. Our contention is, of course, what will they do with that revenue? We've seen the priorities of this government before. We've seen them over the last 14 tired years of their tenure here. Of course, we can't say with a good degree of confidence that they have made the right choices. Whether it be in health care or education or infrastructure or job creation, we've seen failure after failure after failure, and it's about time, as far as I'm concerned, that they get it right the first time. It saves us a whole lot of money when you do that.

We would point to the transparency aspect in terms of, what are they going to do with their money, with the money that's recovered? As the legislation sits and states, there's a potential for the government to actually take the revenue and just tack it onto the provincial debt. I guess they believe not only in trickle-down economics, but they believe in trickle-down climate change mitigation.

I think I'm understanding the rationale there: that if they pay off their debt, then they will be able to, I guess, borrow at a more preferred lending rate and make other expenditures somewhere else—a convoluted way to go about addressing one of the most important issues facing our species.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I believe the minister has been trickling on us all.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, I'm not going to go there. But we would say: Wouldn't it be a lot more of an effective mechanism to identify specific and strategic measures to absolutely combat climate change? One of the ways that you can do that is working with our municipal partners who are on the front lines of supporting economic investment and economic activity that does that. Let's ensure that we're working in tandem with them and in partnership with them.

Why point to this? Well, for the viewers who are tuning in, when we have our experts analyze the bill and the use of the proceeds in the greenhouse gas reduction

account, the bill sets up an accounting procedure, known as the greenhouse gas reduction account, to track accounting transactions to be attributed to the cap-and-trade system. Unlike the existing greenhouse gas reduction account that was established with Bill 185 in 2009 to receive cap-and-trade revenue—so they were already anticipating a cap-and-trade system—this new account does not record the inflows and outflows of money like a bank account. So we essentially will not know how much revenue comes in; we won't know how much revenue comes out. It's bewildering, Speaker, that we can set up a massive new entity to receive and recover revenue and penalties through the cap-and-trade system and not actually know what the value of the cash flow is in that.

Again, the GGR account has now become an abstract accounting procedure with rules for when the balance in the account may be increased and when it can be decreased. Anyone tuning in and listening to that example of how they're going to ensure transparency on the money side, I guess, would be left with a whole host of questions, as I am—and we're in the room here. Although the government isn't putting up speakers to this bill, I would hope that they would clarify that aspect for us, but also for the general public. Because if they don't know where the money is going and they don't know how much you're actually recovering, you're not going to get support for this bill, and, my goodness, if we've ever needed support for something as transformational as this bill, it's now.

It is incumbent upon the government to deliver those answers. Be transparent. This has not been the record of the government over so many other files. We can point to Ornge Air Ambulance; we can point to eHealth; we can point to the cancellation of the gas plants. Transparency has not been a part of their mandate and their operating motives.

So we would like them to do that. We would like them to acknowledge not only that this bill has the potential of going sideways so much as to have the unintended consequence of absolutely harming people, but also of having a failure to have citizens buy into what they know and what we know we need to do. We can't afford—time is running out.

J. Rockström, in a publication from Nature of September 2009, put a paper forward, some data that states that we have already breached the ecological boundaries of a safe operating space for humanity. We're already blown past that. Whether it be climate change, whether it be biodiversity, hydrogen cycles or ocean acidification, we're already blown through those thresholds.

Again, it is our responsibility to do it right and get it right the first time.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, there is a lot to agree with in what the member said. He voiced some of the concerns that almost anybody has when embarking on a new challenge in which the frontier that you're moving into is one that's largely unexplored.

Having grown up during the period where climate change went from something where those two words, “climate” and “change,” were not connected, to the point where people have said, “Well, maybe there’s a link between what we’re doing and what’s happening on earth,” to the point now where there is simply no doubt, it wasn’t possible to foresee, as the world economy developed, how human activity would translate into a permanent, lasting change in the environment.

Two hundred years ago, when we talk about using energy, for example, the energy that civilization used came from human beings and from animals. During the 20th century, a lot of that energy came from coal and from oil and electricity. Now, in the 21st century, we are phasing out the use of coal—oil, somehow or other we’re going to have to work our way through during the 21st century—and of course foreseeing a larger role for clean and green electricity.

Whenever one is trying to do something for the first time, it’s important to keep your scope to the point where it can be accomplished. Many of the suggestions that the member made were perfectly legitimate suggestions: Let’s see if we can take climate change and learn to walk before we run and learn how the first set of initiatives rolls out before we begin to add on additional layers of complexity. Other than that, I thank him very much for his helpful suggestions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to bring comments to my colleague from Essex. He brought up three words: fair, effective and transparent. With the “effective” part, our party brought a number of amendments to the committee when they were debating, and not one of those was actually accepted. I still don’t believe in here that one party over another party has the knowledge game.

We were talking earlier about the scientist from Winnipeg who probably knows the minister. Bill Gates believes this is the smartest man in the world. So you have the richest man in the world believing that this is the smartest man in the world, and yet we have the environment minister suggesting to us, “No, no, they don’t really know what they’re talking about. Just believe me and all will be good in the world.” When they won’t accept one amendment, that raises doubt significantly.

He talked about transparency. The Financial Accountability Officer has actually raised significant concerns about things in this bill. Particularly, what I want to ask the minister—as my colleague from Huron—Bruce has—is: Why can’t the minister tell us just how much exactly it’s going to cost Ontarians to implement his version of this scheme? Their former Liberal finance minister, Greg Sorbara, is calling it a “scheme” and says that he thinks it’s only a way for them to raise money.

We need to always be fair in everything we do, but we have to be—and I said this earlier—we need to be balanced. We certainly have concerns about the climate and where our world is, but we have to be balanced in our approach so that we are actually doing things that are

going to physically make a difference at the end of the day.

The other piece for me, and it kind of wraps up all of those, is a scheme that actually allows credits to be bought. What you’re really allowing is those people who have a lot of money the ability to pay their way through, but they’re actually not decreasing any of their polluting. If they’re truly sincere about fixing the planet, as the minister suggests he’s going to do with this bill, then I think we should actually not allow people to just buy their way out and keep polluting the way they did and just kind of turn a blind eye to it.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, lots of challenges with this bill, and I don’t think it’s going to fix the planet, as the minister suggests that it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the member from Essex. It was great submission that he put in. He comes from labour; I come from heavy industry in Hamilton. I have over 30 years’ experience. I’ve seen all kinds of smokestacks with scrubbers and ventilation systems and screen houses and filtration systems—huge filtration systems on the steel plants—and I’ve seen and worked around what they call baghouses, which are for coke-oven systems and by-product systems. I’ve seen all this. But why I’m saying that is because, for a lot of these considerations, they did not talk to the people in the industry. We had engineers who could have certainly made some contributions to the overall cap-and-trade system.

The cap-and-trade system involves larger companies selling credits they don’t use to smaller companies who can buy them and use them, but that doesn’t give an incentive to those smaller companies to make the changes they require because some of the systems that are very workable and doable are very, very, very expensive. These smaller companies and mid-size companies would not be able to afford it, so they would probably sit on their laurels a bit and not put the money into the systems because the systems are too expensive. So they’ll buy the credits and try to get by on the credits, as opposed to doing something in their own particular regime.

I think what’s going to happen here is that you’re going to need what has always been around this place for the last 100 years: enforcement. Once again, you’re going to need inspectors. Once again, you’re going to need people to enforce this cap-and-trade and to actually track it. I think it’s going to be a huge bureaucracy. I think it’s going to take a lot of money to run it. I think, without the proper inspectors, I’m not quite sure it’s going to go where the minister thinks it’s going to go. I have very grave concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made from the member from Essex.

There are concerns with this bill, the way it’s going to work and the whole issue of cap-and-trade, but the bottom line is that there is no other alternative. We have

to take action. The world's polluting itself. The carbon emissions all over the world are getting higher and higher, so we have to start doing something about it.

I think that one example is California. They introduced a cap-and-trade method and they put a price on carbon. When they did this, companies were forced to become cleaner and turn to green energy. California's economy grew at a pace that exceeded the rest of the United States. In fact, it grew by 3.3% in California. The number of jobs did. It was well over the national rate. Companies are looking at more ways to become green, green-efficient and not focus on coal or oil, which are eventually, at one point in time, going to be phased out.

If we look at the example here in Ontario of the coal-fired plants, when they were open, people in Toronto, especially, and people in my riding in Scarborough Southwest, were breathing in a lot of pollution. During the summertime, especially when the air heated up, there would be so much pollution in the air that there were advisories to stay inside. Senior citizens, "Stay inside," and people who had asthma or other conditions, "Stay inside," because of the amount of pollution that was in there. Last year, a very telling example, we had zero days in Toronto of warning about what was happening outside.

Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: No, it's not wrong; it's right.

We've reduced the amount of coal, which produced a lot of pollution. We switched that off, and it has cleaned up the air quite a bit. We have to continue moving on forward and making sure the health of individuals in Ontario and around the world is kept better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex can now reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Scarborough Southwest for their comments.

There are two things I want to talk about: Number one is that I didn't speak about jobs. It has been said that this is going to kill the automotive industry. I would submit that this presents an enormous opportunity for the automotive industry to transform. They already are innovative. They are already working within jurisdictions that have greenhouse gas systems and cap-and-trade systems. They are, actually, the leaders and pioneers of low-emission technology. They're setting the standard.

What kills jobs are multinational, multilateral free-trade agreements, signed by Liberal governments and Conservative governments, that open the doors to floods of imports that are made in jurisdictions that don't have climate change accords—cheap labour jurisdictions—and that the Conservatives and Liberals continue to sign. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, that the ink is just drying right now on, that the federal Liberals have signed, is and will continue eroding domestic manufacturing.

1700

Climate change is an enormous issue that presents an enormous opportunity. But without actually analyzing

what our current economic system is built on—cheap labour and the offshoring of good-paying manufacturing jobs—then you're doing a disservice to the discussion and the debate. Let's talk about fair trade that recognizes and trades with international partners and jurisdictions that have solid climate change plans that address the issues of trade-exposed industries and make sure that it's fair. That's how you protect jobs. That's how you ensure economic stability, and that's how you ensure a regenerative type of economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to finally have the opportunity to discuss Bill 172 this afternoon.

The Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act is a bill that warrants a lot more discussion than the government has allowed for outside of this House, so I'm eager to bring forward the concerns of my constituents from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex here to Queen's Park today.

This is especially true, since those who have raised concerns about this bill in particular, and the government's approach to environmental policy generally, seem to find themselves demonized by this Liberal government. It's a tactic that has distorted the conversation we are able to have about issues such as these and has led to this government creating policies in a vacuum, apparently unwilling or unable to work with almost anyone in the province.

Suggesting there might be a better approach or a different way of tackling climate change is being painted as heresy and apostasy. I have heard a lot of valid concerns about Bill 172. I'd like to note that I have heard these concerns from people who very much want to see improved environmental policies. They simply don't think this bill goes about it in the right way.

Although the government might like to paint this as an issue of the environment versus the economy, that is an oversimplification that does a disservice to the process of policy development. I believe we can have a thriving economy while we take action on climate change. It doesn't need to be an objective we pursue with scorched-earth tactics and a take-no-prisoners approach.

With more accountability and openness from the Liberal government, this province could fight climate change with policies that are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. The rushed, opaque process this government is pursuing, with a "damn the costs and the casualties" attitude, is not fair to the people of this province and it won't effect the kind of wide-ranging change I think this government wants to see.

But Mr. Speaker, there is an alternate course. I believe if we pursue comprehensive sustainability, then we can create real, lasting and positive change. Henry Ford once said, "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." And that is exactly what this Liberal government is missing. The government has brought this bill to third reading while still being unable to give Ontario's businesses basic information about how

the system will work, what impacts it will have, or other key information they need to budget and plan, even for the year ahead, which makes it seem highly unlikely that the government has done their due diligence to assess what impact cap-and-trade will have on our economy, our businesses or on the lives of the families of this province.

This government is already making our private sector fight with one hand tied behind its back by raising the costs of energy and creating new payroll taxes. But they seem bent on making sure they're blindfolded as well, unable to prepare for even the short-term.

Near my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Gerry Macartney, head of the London Chamber of Commerce, said that the Liberal government is rushing the cap-and-trade system and summarized their approach as “ready, fire, aim.” London-area businesses, he said, would “like to see a little more aiming first.” In fact, after meeting with the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Macartney's impression was that the minister himself didn't understand the details of his own policy.

How are Ontario businesses supposed to adapt and anticipate the effects of this legislation if the minister himself doesn't even seem to grasp what's actually coming?

The concerns of Ontario Chamber of Commerce head Allan O'Dette have been well aired here and in the media, and that's because he has given a very thoughtful, balanced critique of the Liberal government's approach. It's very easy to understand why he's calling for a delay.

The Minister of the Environment has said that those details are coming, but it seems to have taken some public pressure to force the release of the details of this strategy, which is absolutely absurd given that this is all supposed to come online in just over six months. To leave it to this late date is negligence. It's negligence on the part of this government to be so irresponsible and to play so fast and loose with the economy of this province and the livelihood of its people.

This is very basic stuff, but it seems to warrant an explanation since the message clearly isn't getting through. Stability is critical for sustainable economic growth. Ontario businesses are not going to be encouraged to invest or expand here when the government keeps throwing curveballs at them. Companies looking at coming to Ontario are certainly going to be discouraged by the volatility they see this government generating.

Fostering economic stability enables companies to pursue macroeconomic objectives and provide the market with stable prices and employment levels. It creates the right environment for job creation and for companies to maintain a balance of payments. In short, it leads to organic, sustainable growth. Stability generates confidence, and this stimulates investment in technology and human capital.

Speaker, how can companies be expected to effectively plan or mitigate risk when the basic elements of the business environment keep changing? I know this government thinks they can build up the economy by just

throwing money at companies they hand-pick, but that isn't actually a recipe for sustainable growth.

The government moving to push through and implement this scheme on such a short timetable unfortunately coincides with the pending release of the climate change action plan. The comments from the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the details of the plan that were leaked to the Globe and Mail have raised the alarm in the business community. We've heard bold targets and wild dictates, but very little on the how, who or when of these plans. With madcap ideas and audacious aspirational goals being bandied about by this government around climate change initiatives, it raises serious questions about how all this newfound tax revenue generated by cap-and-trade is going to be spent. Based on what we've heard from the Minister of the Environment and his flagrant disregard for the auto sector, it seems much more likely that these funds will somehow be used to kneecap our critical industries rather than foster real economic growth in this province.

Speaker, this isn't a government that has a strong track record of doing its due diligence or examining the potential unintended consequences of their decisions. We have seen something all too similar with the Ministry of Economic Development and their allocation of grants and subsidies. Under the broad objective of stimulating economic growth, this government hands out \$5 billion annually almost entirely behind closed doors, mostly by invitation only, and with no real attempt to gauge whether this money does anything for the provincial economy whatsoever. The government refuses to tell the public where this money has gone, and they aren't tracking whether these so-called investments drive innovation, increase exports or even create long-term jobs. What we do know is that their efforts seem to have made a lot of Liberal donors very happy.

Now we have the Ministry of the Environment looking for its own big pot of discretionary money, and I see no indication that the methods and oversight used in that ministry will be any better than in the Ministry of Economic Development. If this government is going to be taking \$2 billion out of the economy every single year, they need to answer for where it's going.

The Liberal track record on this is shameful, and I'd be remiss if I didn't demand more accountability from this government on behalf of the people that I represent. Families are going to see their fuel costs increase by hundreds of dollars per year and their home heating costs will jump by almost \$500 per year, because of this bill. Where will the minister tell them this money is going?

So far, we've seen this government pay out nearly \$800,000 in rebates for cars that cost over \$100,000. That is the Liberal track record on this. That was taxpayer money, earned by the hard-working people of this province, which was funneled into one of the many sub-standard green initiatives brought forward by this Liberal government. How can the Premier possibly expect people to entrust an additional discretionary \$2 billion every single year to her government?

1710

Speaker, there is a better way to fight climate change. The take-no-prisoners approach this government is pursuing on environmental issues is not egalitarian, effective or helpful. The people of this province deserve better governance, and they deserve well-thought-out, comprehensive policies that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Bill 172 simply does not meet those criteria.

With my few seconds left, I want to put on the record once again that people in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—and, I’m sure, everyone in this province—woke up to that unbelievable story saying that natural gas was going to be banned in any new home construction in this province in about 14 years. That’s a disgrace, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It’s indeed a pleasure to speak on the comments just made by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I listened intently to what he had to say, and I think there was more said in between the lines, as well. I think that what he was saying in between the lines was that for—how long have you guys been in power, 12 or 13 years now?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Too long.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You would think there’s a learning curve when you first come into power, but when you’ve been there 11, 12, 13 years or longer, you should know that when you present a major bill to the House, to the Legislature, you do it right. You take your time, you get your wording all together, and you know what you’re doing.

I heard this afternoon that at committee—I know I’ll be corrected if I’m wrong—the Liberals made 100 amendments to their own bill.

Interjection: It was 70.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Seventy? Seven zero? Seventy amendments to their own bill, Speaker, let alone that they turned down 100 from the PCs and adopted one or two of ours. When you present legislation and you have to amend it 70 times by your own party, you’ve done something wrong. You haven’t done it right. You haven’t thought it through. You rushed this bill without thinking about it. You should have prepared it better. You still can’t sell it, because you’re not looking after the lowest on the socio-economic scale. You’ve got to give them some hope for the future. You have to help them pay this bill when it comes down on their head and their shoulders.

You guys didn’t get it right, and you should be ashamed for that. You come into the House now with big smiles, big smirks, with this new scheme that says, “We’re all going to be in this together, but we’re not going to worry about the people at the bottom; we’re just going to talk about our friends at the top.” That is wrong, and you should not be doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It does give me some pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill 172. We’ve been speaking at length on this bill, and it has come up that a number of members have grandchildren—five grandchildren, in fact. I don’t have five, but I do have one, and my little grandson George is going to be three this July, I’m proud to say.

Interjection: Yay, George!

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Yes, thank you.

I’m delighted, I have to say, that we are taking measures on climate change. I know that it’s an ambitious agenda, but we need to act now. There is no time to delay, and it’s clear that we have to act now.

I just want to spend a couple of seconds on the transparency and accountability side of this bill. I do want to remind the House that we would require an annual report of the funds being credited and charged to the greenhouse gas reduction account, as well as a description of the initiatives for which the funds were used. It is very important to make sure that we have accountability and that we do make appropriate investments. It would require the government to publish reports on the use of cap-and-trade proceeds, which will be invested in initiatives that reduce or support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

It has been said by a member of the third party that we’re all smiles and smirks. We’re very concerned about the environment, and I know that everybody in this House is, as well. I think that, if there is any confusion around this bill, I would encourage any of the members of the opposition or the third party to make sure that they get appropriate briefings to clear up any of those areas of confusion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to commend the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on his dissertation on this bill.

The member from Kingston and the Islands said that they were going to have somebody give us briefings. I guess that we should have them come. I would like to see the person come and give us this bill of goods that sold the Liberal caucus on this—maybe they haven’t sold it to the caucus yet; maybe cabinet has to go and do that.

What a fortuitous leak that the Globe and Mail got, so that we had this exposé today on this. I am sure that the Premier is glad she is in Israel or wherever it is and she is able to dodge this for now. But anyway, we’ll be back in a couple of weeks, and there will be questions then.

I am waiting to hear more from Unifor, and also from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. There are going to be major changes there to that. Agriculture has been led to believe that they are going to put hundreds of millions of dollars in the expansion of natural gas into rural Ontario. The Premier challenged agriculture to increase their production. To do that, they’ve told this government—I know the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Don McCabe, very well. He has told this government, along with his federation, that they need

access to that natural gas. I guess that they need to make sure they get that point across to Minister Murray, because obviously he didn't hear that.

Anyway, one way they could reduce greenhouse gases—they could do it very simply. They could adopt my private member's bill about reducing greenhouse gases by adopting liquid natural gas for tractor trailers. They're 3% of the traffic and 27% to 30% of the pollution. Now there is a fair and balanced way to decrease greenhouse gases in this province. We could move towards that, and it wouldn't cost \$3 billion a year.

I don't think anybody trusts this government—I don't think anybody trusts any government—to look after a fund of \$3 billion to \$5 billion. Who knows how much it's going to generate? If they were that confident in this, they should have run in an election on it. They didn't, and they should stop with this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to have a couple of minutes again to speak on any bill. Today it's Bill 172, on climate change and a low-carbon economy.

I think that there are few things that we all can agree on. Climate change is a reality; I think that everyone in the House can agree on that. The first time that it became a reality to me was when I was 16, and it was the first time that I saw a racoon in northern Ontario. It's been going on for a long time, because they are moving north. As a farmer, I see lots of other things that point to the climate changing.

I think the second thing that the majority of us in the House agree on is that cap-and-trade is a good system that can be made to work. I think that we can all admit—maybe most of us can agree with that.

Where some of us run into a bit of trouble is whether or not we trust the current government to be able to pull it off, so that it actually works and so it is truly accountable. We'll give you an example from this morning. We have got this \$1.9-billion fund, and it's supposed to be fully accountable. But this morning, we had an issue where the Minister of Energy is saying that we are making a profit selling surplus hydro, when it's actually costing us, and what he is calling a profit is the residual income. Quite frankly, we aren't sure that Liberal math is going to work when it comes to where these funds are actually put into the system.

Again, the first announcement was \$100 million to retrofit homes, put through Union Gas and Enbridge. When I asked, "Well, how are people with oil or people with propane—?" "Oh, well, they qualify. They go through Union Gas and Enbridge." That's not how the real world works. That's what we are concerned with: that the government across the way doesn't understand how the real world works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can now reply.

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Mr. Monte McNaughton: It was a pleasure to speak to this bill this afternoon and the plan that this govern-

ment has to continue decimating the economy and make life much more expensive for everyday people in this province.

I'd like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his comments, telling the government and warning the government to take their time on this and get it right.

To the member for Kingston and the Islands, who talked about an ambitious agenda, I would say, quite frankly, that this is a radical plan that's going to kill jobs in this province. It's going to increase the expenses for every family in this province, I guess to your advantage. It's going to take billions and billions of dollars out of the pockets of business and people. I think that's very unfortunate. It actually further demonstrates how out of touch this government has become after 13 years. Do you realize how people are struggling to make ends meet in this province?

I thank my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton—the king of Sarnia, as some call him. He has a great bill before the Legislature, a private member's bill. In fact, it just went through the Legislative Assembly committee—something sensible and reasonable that I think that this government should adopt.

Of course, I thank my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his input.

We know that this is a divided government, a divided cabinet on this issue, hence why that document was leaked today. It wasn't intended to be leaked, from what I've gathered from the reporter on Twitter. But I want to get on the record that I can understand why the cabinet is divided. We've got a minister saying that he's going to kill 50,000 jobs in the nuclear industry and one out of every six jobs in the auto sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let me begin by saying again that New Democrats have supported the initiative of a cap-and-trade system before, have called for it before, and strongly stand behind a program that will effectively reduce the amount of pollution that is being produced by our province. That's absolutely our position. As many people have stated before from our caucus, our concern is whether or not the plan proposed by this government will effectively achieve that result.

There are a number of areas that we're concerned with, but three key principles were repeated, and I want to add my voice to it.

We want to ensure that any plan that the government proposes satisfies three major criteria. The plan has to be fair, it has to be effective and it has to be transparent.

Before I get into the components and the criteria that the government has to satisfy for a plan to be sufficient in order to address these very serious concerns, let's lay out how important this concern is.

Like our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane stated, there is absolutely no doubt that humans have left a negative impact on our environment. There is no doubt that we have impacted our environment through various steps that we have taken, whether it's through polluting our water, polluting the air or polluting the land.

In addition, as a result of the emissions that we produce as a society, there are greenhouse gases that are impacting climate change.

We all agree in this House that climate change is a serious issue and the negative impact that we have had on this environment, on our environment, is a serious issue. We must do something about it. Whether it's in our own lives, for our own quality of living; whether it's with respect to the quality of air that we breathe; whether it's with respect to the water that we drink, we need to do something about the environment. We need to ensure that for one generation—for our generation—the environment is protected and, in addition, we have a responsibility to ensure that the environment is protected for future generations. That's something that we absolutely believe in. That's an absolute commitment that we all should have.

Now, how do we achieve that? We need to ensure that any steps we take as a society are actually effective. That's one of the key issues here: With respect to the plan proposed by the government, we have some serious concerns about its effectiveness. Will the plan proposed by the government actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

One of the key concerns is that the plan the government proposes allows for exemptions for the major polluters. Now, while we absolutely support the idea that there are certain industries that are going to be put at an unfair disadvantage because they have to compete with other jurisdictions where there is not a similar cap-and-trade system, and they may be in a position where they are not as competitive, having an allowance—an exemption—to ensure that our industries are able to compete makes some sense. But a system that allows all the major polluters to have an exemption—a blanket exemption—doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, and it does not bode very well for a policy that would be effective in reducing emissions. That's one of our major concerns.

The second concern is, with respect to having community buy-in, we need a plan that's fair. On a moral level, it should be fair but also as it concerns buy-in. If a plan that's proposed by the government disproportionately affects people from the lower socio-economic backgrounds or demographics, community members will be outraged that they are being forced to bear the brunt of a plan, but the folks that pollute the most are allowed to be exempt. A failure to provide any sort of consideration or attention to the realities of those folks is an unfair plan, and that's one of the major criticisms of this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, if the people of this province don't believe in this plan, this is not something we can move forward with. We need a plan that has buy-in, that people feel supportive of. One of the ways we can ensure that people believe in this plan is to make sure the plan is fair.

In general, fairness is a principle that should apply in all government policies, but in particular, with something like the environment, we don't have the luxury of creating divisions. This is something that we must act on.

This is something that requires the commitment of everyone in this province. If the government proposes a plan that divides the community—that pits people who are in a worse economic position against those who are in a better position—that's simply an unfair plan. It's not going to have wide buy-in, and that's going to cause disruptions for a plan that we need to implement.

With respect to transparency, some of the Liberal members got up and said, "Oh, this plan has transparency." I strongly beg to differ. There are serious holes in the plan for transparency of what the government is proposing.

First and foremost, we have an Environmental Commissioner who is completely absent from any of this bill's discussion, from any of the elements of this bill. There is no consideration for the Environmental Commissioner. We have an Environmental Commissioner for a reason. They should be incorporated and involved in the process. The fact that they are completely absent in this legislation is a gaping hole. It is a serious concern.

The other area of concern is that the government proposes that revenue from this cap-and-trade program will be directed towards environmental initiatives. However, the way that the government has laid out that initiative—that the revenue will be used for these environmental initiatives—the problem is that there isn't a separate account that has been created. The funds will flow into a general account, and there's really no accountability to ensure that the funds will be used to advance some initiative that will actually help the environment.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A slush fund.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The concern is that it is essentially creating a slush fund.

Again, we don't have the luxury of creating a plan that can create divisions. We need a plan that has the full support of the people of Ontario. Having a slush fund, having a proposal that doesn't specifically create a separate account committed or dedicated to environmental initiatives, does not create support or trust in the minds of the people.

In fact, we have a number of examples where this government has failed utterly to follow through on commitments they have made. It is eroding public trust not only in the Liberal government but in governments in general. That's something that is creating a great deal of apathy, and that's something that does not bode well for our democratic systems.

The other element that's very troubling is we have had numerous examples where delegated administrative authorities are not accountable. They don't have the oversight and are not institutions that are able to be properly supervised. They don't have the ability for the government to provide the accountability that we need to provide. This proposal of the government is to create another delegated administrative authority. They lack accountability. They are essentially a public service or a public entity but without any public scrutiny. That doesn't make any sense. We've seen what happens with delegated administrative authorities.

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One example is Tarion. The system that's been created by Tarion—it's essentially a public service, in the fact it only exists because it's the only option for new homeowners in terms of their warranty. It's essentially existing only because of the government, but it's not accountable to the Attorney General, it's not directly accountable to the government, and there have been numerous complaints about its effectiveness in whether it's actually providing a service to the public.

Similarly, if what the government is proposing here is to create another delegated administrative authority, we have that same concern. This administrative authority won't have the scrutiny of the government, and will not be something that the Attorney General or the Auditor General will be able to investigate. Again, that creates some problems with respect to transparency and it creates problems with respect to the public trust.

The point of any sort of cap-and-trade is to put a price on pollution. The goal of this placing a value on pollution is to reduce pollution. With respect to what the government is proposing, we don't know for certain if this plan will be effective. We don't know if the targets will be able to be achieved. We don't have any accountability with respect to those targets and how they can be achieved. So there are some serious problems.

Coming back to the initiative—we need a plan that reduces greenhouse emissions. We need a plan that reduces pollution. We need to do something to protect our environment. There is no debate. There is no question about that. We are committed to doing that. New Democrats are committed to doing that. I am personally committed to that, but what is the government proposing? Is it something that's actually going to satisfy that concern? We have serious doubts and serious concerns about that.

I want to say very clearly: This is a crucial turning point in our society. We have an opportunity to act now so that our future generations are protected. We have an opportunity now to protect our environment, not only for our generation but for future generations, and we don't have the luxury of not acting. We must act now. We must do something now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I spoke earlier today and I wanted to add a few more comments. I wanted to speak particularly to this bill and how we have worked with the First Nations and Métis communities in Ontario.

The bill specifically acknowledges that First Nation and Métis communities have a very special relationship with the environment, and have had for generations and generations and generations. They are deeply committed not only physically to the land but spiritually to the land and culturally to the land—not only to the land, but the water, the air and all of the animals. The bill, out of respect—and more than just out of respect; there's a body of knowledge there that we want to tap into. So the bill does include a provision that requires the minister to consider any traditional ecological knowledge that a First

Nation or Métis community may have in respect of any action plan the government is required to prepare. That's called TEK: traditional ecological knowledge.

The bill also includes a provision making it very clear that nothing in the bill is intended to take away from the protections provided for aboriginal and treaty rights in the Canadian Constitution. That provision is intended to signify respect for those rights and is not intended to impact the interpretation or protection of those rights in the context of the bill.

I've been to some 63 First Nation on-site visits, many of them in the far, far north, and I've seen the effects of climate change in the Far North and how it's affected things like ice roads, fish, fowl and wild animals. This is a good bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to get up to comment on the member from Gore-Malton. He talked about the need and opportunity to actually do something and have an impact. I think that's important. We see in front of us, I heard earlier today, a very radical plan. This government, if you go back less than two years ago, was very public when it was asked, during the last election campaign, whether they would move ahead with a carbon tax. They were very clear to say no, they wouldn't. There's a point there, that they don't have a mandate from the people to do this. But if they're going to go ahead, this plan is really all about getting more money. It's not about making a difference.

I heard a comment before: "Well, how would just putting a tax on it and making it revenue-neutral work?"—like they have in BC. It has shown that it has worked.

Will they have to increase the price of carbon as they go forward? That's something that they'll likely have to do, just as you'd have to do here with cap-and-trade. If you don't make the price of carbon significant, there's not a change.

By giving the money back to the people, there's still that advantage of not spending or not wasting your money on carbon if you can actually look at an alternative. By putting money in your pocket, that allows you to look at an alternative, and it's really a way that we could see as being productive and a plan that would actually work, instead of just taking money out of the economy and putting more and more people on social assistance, because we'll have more and more people who will be out of work, and more and more people who will be in poverty because it will cost more to heat your homes and more to live in this province. That's the plan we're going to. Really, it's all about a government that's out of money.

We think that our climate, and the world, is worth more than that. We want to see a plan that actually works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. As a former criminal defence attorney, the guy knows how to dissect

and articulate an argument, and I think he did that very well during his 10-minute hit.

He pointed to the lack of accountability built into the bill—a glaring omission, to not bring in as a consultant, a valued partner, the environment commissioner. She's actually purposely excluded from any of the mandates built into the bill. It just seems ridiculous that the government would ignore and ostracize our environment commissioner, who comes with a whole host of information and knowledge and resources and third-party validation and transparency and respect. They obviously don't value that, which is par for the course for these guys.

I was just chatting with my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain—

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

We were talking about the Detroit River, where I try to get in to fish, as much as possible, for world-class pickerel fishing. If you're on the American side, it's walleye fishing, and on the Canadian side it's pickerel fishing.

He asked me if it was a clean river. These days, it's amongst the cleanest. It's beautiful.

Mr. Bill Walker: The algae got it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, despite the algae bloom in the lakes, the water quality is clean. Due to decades-old regulations that prohibited the dumping of toxins from the industrial chemical valley in Sarnia and upstream throughout Detroit, it's a clean system.

That took a lot of work. That took some pain, I'm sure. But because of it, we have a clean system, we have a clean ecology, and something that generations can partake in.

I hope that is the effect of this bill going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to be able to join in the dialogue related to the presentation by our colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on Bill 172.

I do have to agree with my colleague from Essex that it is pickerel fishing in northern Ontario. It's called the Pickerel River, not the walleye river, so we will always call it pickerel. It's very important that we distinguish that, too.

My colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton had a very eloquent speech. I don't agree with everything that was in it, but one thing that he did talk about, which was something that I thought was important, was the low-income households and what we need to do to address that. I know that the government, in committee, worked with the third party in bringing forward motions that would require this.

Let me quote that the climate change action plan would work on the impact of cap-and-trade on low-income households. The motion also required the plan to include actions to assist those households with Ontario's transition to the low-carbon economy.

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If we look, then, to what the auction proceeds must—again, I highlight that: must—be used for, it's for GHG emission reductions. The proposed authorized uses designated in the bill are energy sources and uses—production of renewable energy; land use and buildings, or the retrofitting of buildings, which is important not only throughout Ontario—I always highlight my great riding of Sudbury and northern Ontario and the importance of retrofitting buildings in the north; transportation; industry; agriculture, forestry and natural systems; and waste management. I know organic waste composting systems generate large amounts of greenhouse gases. This bill will actually address those.

And we are looking at, in conjunction with working with the third party, addressing low-income households.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton can now reply.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank all the members for joining in the debate. I appreciate their comments.

I was struck by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the importance of recognizing, first and foremost, our First Nations communities, aboriginal communities, and their generational knowledge with respect to the environment and how important it is to take care of our environment. I think that's absolutely something important to consider—I think that's at least one positive sign in the bill—but it has to be more than just lip service. We need to, in a meaningful way, really involve our First Nations communities as partners and as leaders and recognize their sovereignty and deal with them as sovereign partners.

One of the issues raised by our member from Essex was something that really spoke to me. When we talk about natural resources in our province and Canada in general—we have a tremendous natural resource: the natural resource of water. It's so offensive to me that our fresh water, which is such a precious resource in this world, is polluted and sometimes not drinkable. That's one of the issues that really speaks to the importance of environmental concern and protection. If we look at this precious resource and how it's being polluted, it really offends me in my core that it's not something that we should be able to drink at any point in time. Our rivers and our lakes should not in any way be contaminated. We should never have fear to be able to use that water, and the fact that we do have that concern is deeply troubling. It speaks to how important it is for us to commit to really working towards protecting our environment, not just because it's a resource, but because this is our home. We need to ensure that we protect it, not for ourselves, but for our future generations and everyone who can enjoy and live in this land.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to add my comments to Bill 172 during third reading and have some discussion afterwards.

The Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act has come full circle. We've been through first reading, second reading and, of course, through committee, where, we've heard today, the government amended their own bill 70 times. They didn't pass any of our amendments that we tried to put forward to make the bill a little stronger. The government is using this to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, as I stated at second reading of this bill, that has been proven to be ineffective in actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

More or less, it has been coming across to people in this province, especially in my riding, that this is nothing more than a cash grab—that this government is going to utilize this money and, of course, spend it on whatever they wish. They do say that they may have some accountability and transparency in the system, but it's not a separate account outside of the general revenues; it's a line item. Of course, we all know creative accounting can occur, especially with this government, and the money, we know, will not be spent as it should.

We actually believe, on this side of the House, that if you're going to collect that money, you should be refunding it in other ways to the people of Ontario to mitigate the increased expenses in their lives, on top of the huge costs that this government has imposed on the people of this province over the last 15 years, including the health tax, the HST, which they brought in, the high hydro rates—one of the highest in North America—that they've brought forward in the name of green energy into municipalities, which clearly have said no over time.

It's quite absurd, Mr. Speaker, especially in my riding, where I had two municipalities right beside each other, 40 kilometres apart: One didn't want wind turbines, said no; it had a plebiscite with its constituents and 84% said, "No, we don't want them." Then I had another municipality not far away that said, "Yes, we'd love wind turbines." This government gave the wind turbines to the community that said no. It's that type of listening that gets us into trouble.

In second reading, I mentioned that there are other ways this government can act to help the environment out and where they've failed. I know they're trying to work on it now, but I mentioned wetlands. We've destroyed much of our wetlands in our province, which not only work to purify and filter out water but also help prevent the flooding that we're seeing. Probably one of the reasons Toronto floods so much when we get huge downpours is that they've pretty much exhausted all their wetlands in the area.

The other item that I've mentioned previously was in regard to stewardship councils, which were strong organizations throughout province. This government pretty much destroyed any stewardship councils. There are a few still going on out there, those that were strong enough to maintain. My Elgin Stewardship Council is quite strong because they have the resources themselves to maintain, but a lot of the stewardship councils in the province, through the changes this government has made, have disappeared.

Stewardship councils are strong in this province because they're the ones that will take a farmer's land or take a wetland that's been damaged and fix it up, rehabilitate it back into a wetland or create a wetland, working with organizations like Ducks Unlimited or the Nature Conservancy of Canada to ensure that that type of conservation is going on. I think that's very, very important, which this government is missing out on. It's utilizing conservation of our lands, utilizing the people in our province who will volunteer to work to create suitable environments that will help clean water and help prevent floodings and add an aesthetic effect to rural Ontario. That's what they should be working on. Those are the people they should be engaging. Instead, this government barges ahead not listening to rural Ontario and is stuffing wind turbines down people's throats.

Bill 172 will also cause continued economic impact to businesses. We've heard just recently that the chamber of commerce wrote the minister asking him to delay it another year so that they can actually see the costs that are going to affect businesses across the province so that they can be more prepared for the impact of another tax coming from this government on businesses.

As I said earlier, ratepayers already have to deal with high electricity costs. Now businesses are going to have to compound that—on top of the global adjustment charge that they get right now because of the Green Energy Act—onto this cap-and-trade scheme that this government has created. From what I've read, home heating will go up \$160 by 2017 and \$900 by 2030 because of this tax. Small businesses will see an increase of \$170,000 more a year for energy costs alone next year and more than \$900,000 by 2030, in combination. Mr. Speaker, that can only lead to job loss in this province. Many businesses, especially small businesses in this province, are having a hard time making ends meet, and the high cost of energy is only going to reduce it.

This government's bill—they did not change the transparency and they didn't change the accountability. We've seen, through their inability to manage other facets of this government, waste continually occurring, misspending, of course leading to scandal, without any great oversight other than themselves to oversee the money.

The bill itself does contain some stiff penalties for offences for both corporations and individuals. Individuals face fines of up to \$6 million or five years in prison for fraud, market manipulation and insider trading. That's well and good.

Hopefully, the OPP is not going to be investigating this government on anything with regard to this cap-and-trade scheme. We already have five OPP investigations against this government. It's almost as if the OPP have opened up an office just beside the Premier's office in order to continue their deliberations with regard to this government.

1750

Mr. Speaker, I also brought up in second reading, which I thought was quite telling, Steve Paikin's show *The Agenda*, where Greg Sorbara, who was former

finance minister in this government during the McGuinty years and one of the head organizers of the party, came out and said this government will sell its “imaginary product called carbon credits” and it will raise prices on all products purchased by Ontarians. Sorbara questioned this Liberal government by saying, “Although the [finance] minister said there are no tax increases, the fact is that there’s a \$1.9-billion increase. I call it a flow-through tax that will ultimately affect consumers.... It’s an interesting way to raise money while saying, at the same time, you’re not raising taxes.”

It’s interesting that one of the masters of Liberal spin has actually called them out on the Liberal spin. It’s unfortunate that this government does not sit back and listen to its own members saying that this is a bad plan; this is a bad idea.

Then, to top it off, as we’re finishing debate on third reading on this bill, lo and behold, the *Globe and Mail* receives a report leaked from the cabinet which obviously states that this government is in turmoil. There is no unanimity—is that the right—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Unanimity.

Mr. Bill Walker: Unanimity.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Unanimity; thank you. Tongue-tied. I can get it.

Interjection: There’s no buy-in.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: There is no buy-in. Thank you very much.

There is no one voice that suits all the cabinet. They are obviously split. For the cabinet to actually leak a document, I think it’s showing the breakdown that this government is having over this issue, and I would love to sit in, as the member from Sarnia–Lambton mentioned, on a caucus meeting to see how that debate goes. Because, really, the cabinet is in it together, but it’s the backbenchers that pay the price.

We have seen it with autism, where they have cut children five and under from having any sort of treatment. Once you reach five years old, the IBI is cancelled. You’ve seen high energy rates. I can just imagine the arguments going on and now, with this huge plan, in which the government is looking to end the use of natural gas in homes and businesses—what an effect that will have throughout the province. I can just imagine the arguments that they will be going through.

I had hoped the government will take the time and consult with Ontarians before going forward with this radical plan that they have. It’s unfortunate they don’t consult rural Ontario, but maybe this time they will open up before they move forward with plans that are going to hike energy rates, decrease available jobs and, at the end of the day, control what you can buy, how you can buy it and where you can live in this province.

I look forward to more questions and comments as we go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the comments from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He talked a lot about fiscal accountability, and who can blame him?

We have a government that has time and time again shown their inability and their ineptitude to present us with value for the public dollar, whether it be the gas plants, Ornge, eHealth, whether it be our procurement process.

I can’t believe that we aren’t talking about this. We should be talking about it ad nauseam. Unfortunately, we’re too busy following the scandal of the day. But talk about a procurement process through Infrastructure Ontario, mandated through the Minister of Infrastructure, through the government and ultimately right to the Premier, because this is her baby. We have overspent to the tune of \$8 billion on public infrastructure where we didn’t have to. Over the last nine years this government vaporized—actually they didn’t even vaporize it because had they actually lit the money on fire, we would have at least gotten heat out of the dollars. We didn’t even get that. There is nothing to show for the extra \$8 billion that the Liberal government, under Kathleen Wynne as the Premier, has spent on infrastructure.

Imagine what we could do to mitigate climate change. Imagine what we could do to fund our school system. Imagine what we could do through our health care system. But you’re going to make excuses for \$8 billion of vaporized public money through infrastructure. How could you blame an honourable member like the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London when he says, “We don’t trust these guys to implement any type of system that deals with money”? There are some people you just can’t trust with the cashbox. More and more, the public are seeing and feeling that we can’t do that. We need oversight built in; we need accountability; we need transparency and fairness—things that this government is never able to deliver.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, it’s time that we got to the vote on the third reading of this bill. I say that for this reason: At second reading of the bill, we put about 10 hours of debate into the bill. It then—

Interjections.

Interjection: Keep going.

Hon. David Zimmer: It then went out to committee—

Interjections.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. I want to tell you: 10 hours at second reading, about 20 hours at committee and nine hours on third reading. It’s unprecedented to spend nine hours at third reading of a bill, especially after 20 hours at committee and about 10 hours on second reading.

The members should be brave enough—they’ve made all of their arguments; there’s nothing more to say. We should put this to a vote and get on with it.

People of Ontario are expecting this. We’ve got to tackle the issues raised in this bill, the climate change issues. It’s important for the province, it’s important for the economy and it’s important for our children and our grandchildren. We need to bring certainty to the business

community and we need to bring certainty to our citizens. It's time to vote on it.

I have no idea why you're spinning out this debate—spinning it out, spinning it out. It wasn't as if there was something interesting or new or constructive that they were saying. It's all bafflegab. They might as well stand up and recite the poem: How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood? That's the level of the debate that we're hearing after nine hours. They've completely run out of gas. You know what happens when a car runs out of gas? It just stalls. You are stuck—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I just want to say that the minister talking about listening—there were over 100 amendments that they brought, and they accepted absolutely zero of ours. So maybe they could take a little bit of a lesson in listening.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, as he always is, was very well prepared. He talked about a cash grab, that this is for the slush fund. That's why they really want to get this bill in, because the meter is running and they need to be able to have something in there. There's no separate account. We can't understand why that would be the case.

He talked a little bit about creative accounting. The Green Energy Act, if we'll recall, was supposed to be a \$40-million program. It turned into a \$1.1-billion boondoggle. I think they actually spun that. It was a seat-saver program.

But don't listen to just me. I'm going to actually talk a little bit about George Vegh, who was in our clippings this morning:

"The energy experience can be drawn upon for some lessons.

"The first lesson is that bad processes lead to bad decisions. The electricity sector had no effective checks and balances. The Minister of Energy could direct billions of dollars of public expenditures with the stroke of a pen. Any new regulatory structure will require clear oversight to prevent or at least reduce imprudent investments.

"Related is the need for greater transparency in decision-making.... This gave consultations the appearance of a façade" in the last go-round.

"Finally, facts matter. Ontario energy decisions were made in a factual vacuum. Supply and conservation were pursued with little regard to system reliability needs, leading to massive surplus and acquiring resources that did not meet demand requirements.... The recent controversy over electricity prices going up as a result of conservation is a case in point." The minister won't even provide details of how much this is going to cost, so there needs to be some clear accountability. "Any new system should have strict cost-benefit requirements so that decisions can be made and evaluated through a straightforward analysis.

"The prospect of a new agency to make decisions around investment in carbon reduction is daunting for

those who fear a repetition of Ontario's previous experience in energy management."

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't say it any better myself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who was just talking about a woodchuck, I say: I slit a sheet, a sheet I slit, whoever slits a sheet is a good sheet slitter.

Now to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London: He talked about the government's lack of accountability, lack of transparency and lack of trust. He looked at his crystal ball. He predicted rising prices in energy and he predicted loss of jobs. He talked about Greg Sorbara, a former Minister of Finance in the Liberal government, a former campaign manager of many campaigns for the Liberal Party. Mr. Sorbara says that this is "a flow-through tax" that will cost consumers. Now, that's like the truth. We don't hear that a lot around here from the other side, but we hear it from their former ministers. They're pulling the veil, lifting the veil, putting the light under the bushel basket or whatever it is, but now we know what's really going on over there.

It's like the member from Sarnia–Lambton said earlier: If you believe in it so much, you should have run on it. You should have made it a campaign issue, just as you should have made selling Hydro One a campaign issue, but you didn't.

Look, New Democrats believe in a carbon cap-and-trade kind of policy. But it has to be fair, it has to be efficient and it has to be transparent. We've heard that it isn't transparent, it isn't fair and it won't be efficient, because there is no transparency; there is no accountability. The Environmental Commissioner has no say in it. The Auditor General has little to say with it. The Financial Accountability Officer hasn't been invited to the table. They have a lot of explaining to do to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London has up to two minutes to reply, if he chooses to take it.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I won't take two minutes because I know that the dinner bell is ringing.

Thanks to the members from Essex and Windsor–Tecumseh; I appreciate the comments that you made and I just hope you won't be supporting this bill come tomorrow, when we vote on the third reading for this bill.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Thank you very much. I don't think that we are having too much bafflegab here, but we are having a lot of bloviating and prevaricating. I hope that, at the end of the day, we can get through this legislation.

Of course, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, as always, talked about the boondoggles that continually go on on this side of the government. We hope that it changes and, hopefully, at the end of the debate, we see a system—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

To wrap up: Let's hope, at the end of the day, that this money is utilized correctly, and we don't have a scandal down the road.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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